EX: LIBRIS:
JAMES & LAVRA: E: STVART
: CARROW: ABBEY :
·NORWICH·

Written by Catharine Booth
afterwards Mrs. J. G. Stuart
of Balgonie, & Mother
of James Stuart

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/walterdeverelldo00boot_0

WALTER DEVERELL.

WALTER DEVERELL.

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.
1838.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS,
WHITEFRIARS.

WALTER DEVERELL.

CHAPTER I.

As the establishment of Mrs. Russel consisted of only two female domestics, Alice, as well as herself, often assisted in the various household occupations which constitute the chief employment of a female. One of these consisted in going occasionally to the fruit-market, and on errands to give orders to the different tradespeople for things required in the management of the necessary economy.

On the day following that of our last chapter, Alice had many such errands to perform ; and for that purpose she set out soon after breakfast. She had not seen Walter that morning, as he had gone out at an early hour, intending to call before breakfast to offer his apology to the Earl of Ellerton, for the omission of the former day ;

and Alice vainly strove to convince herself that it was not his absence that made her feel so unusually dispirited. She was glad of being obliged to take active exertion; for she felt in no humour for mental employment. After going to several places, all in various directions, she proceeded to Covent Garden Market, where Mrs. Russel had commissioned her to make a small purchase of fruit, which she was to carry home.

On turning the corner of the Piazza, her eye caught a figure, which one glance served to recognise. It was Walter!—but wherefore was he here?—and he was leaning against a pillar, looking round him, as if waiting and expecting some one. His eye caught hers. He hurried forward, and, before they had time to exchange a hasty word of meeting, he had drawn her arm within his.

"I am glad you have come at last," exclaimed he.

"At last, Walter! You did not expect to meet *me* here?"

"Did I not, Alice? Do you then suppose I was deaf or asleep when I heard Mrs. Russel tell you to 'be sure and go to Covent Garden the first thing to-morrow morning;' and where else could I expect to see you? But that is no matter, we see each other so often, that I cannot

think there is any wonder in this meeting; and, Alice, let us talk of the subject we left off last night. I fear—I know I must have hurt your feelings by my mode of expressing myself; but forgive me. I know you will. It was not intended."

"Forgive you, Walter! I forgave you at the moment. I felt sure you did not mean what you said. But wherefore this explanation?"

"Ask me not; my feelings are much changed. Alice, till now I never thought I should have felt the hour of parting as I now fear I shall feel it."

Alice trembled. She hoped—nay, she now almost dreaded an avowal of those feelings she had so long wished to think she might inspire.

"And yet we must part," continued he, after a pause; "and it seems almost selfish in me thus to dwell on a subject which I know must give you pain; for I am vain enough—I am happy enough to think you will not rejoice when I am gone."

Alice could not trust her voice to reply; but her silence was more eloquent than words; and, as Walter bent forward as he spoke, he caught a glimpse of her averted and down-cast face; and he read there emotion that awoke a thousand contending emotions in his breast.

"Alice," said he, in a lowered and faltering

tone, as they turned and retraced their steps along the Piazza, "it is selfish—it is even cruel to torment you with *my* fate; yet, dearly as I love you—and you are the dearest being to my existence—I cannot refrain from an anxious wish that I may retain a place in your memory, even though my image there recorded can only awaken sorrow. Yes, Alice, I would rather inflict pain on your gentle heart than think that heart had forgotten me."

"But wherefore talk thus? It is not necessary that I should feel pain in remembering you. I feel—I know I never can cease to do so. How could I? Have we not been friends—companions? Have I not loved you as a brother? and may I not continue to do so without pain or sorrow?"

"You have loved me as your *brother*," replied Walter, in a sadder, but calmer, tone; "alas! I shall have no longer in my power to offer you a brother's protection. I would not wish my image to recal only pain; but I fear that one, whose fate is as dark as mine now appears, can awaken but little pleasure."

"Your fate! Oh! Walter, talk not thus despondingly. *You*, who always speak of hope and bright prospects, what gloomy fancy has taken possession of your mind?"

"No fancy, Alice; life is a sad reality when

one begins to try it: mine has been hitherto little more than the dream of boyhood; now, and only now, I must begin my career of real existence. My chances are no worse than others'; but no wonder that I feel less spirit in the outset, as I am uncheered by the smile of one affectionate heart, and must struggle on, aware that there does not exist a single living being who cares whether I fail or succeed."

"Walter, is this kind? Is this feeling? Or do you only seek to tamper with a heart that you have in your power, to behold its weakness?"

"How! do you, Alice, think that *you* could sympathise in my toils? Could *you* be elated or depressed by my success?"

He uttered these words with a vehemence that at first almost terrified Alice. At length, she faintly replied,

"Why should I not? Would not you feel so towards me?"

"Alice," exclaimed Walter, drawing her closer, and pressing the arm that was within his with almost painful pressure, "Alice, I have nothing to offer worthy your affection; but promise me, at least, that you will not forget me. Permit me to think of you, as one to whom my fate is not indifferent. Promise me—no, no—I will not ask you to promise *that*—Alice, all I ask

is, when another becomes dearer to you than I could ever hope to be, at least say farewell, and let me hear from yourself that I must think on you no more."

Alice trembled violently; but she looked round, and the place reminded her that it was no scene to display violent emotions. They still walked backwards and forwards on the Piazza. She strove to muster strength for a reply, when a voice behind them suddenly exclaimed,

"Ha, Deverell! So I have caught you, at last. And this is the reason of your playing the truant so long."

Both started, and Alice, confused and terrified, endeavoured to hide her face from the stranger, whom Walter, no less confused, recognised as the Earl of Ellerton.

"I see you are busy now," said his lordship, laughing, while, with fashionable effrontery, he placed himself in a position so as to be enabled to stare full at Alice's vainly-averted face. "I shall not detain you now; and the fair one who now commands you will pardon my too hasty interruption. Good bye, Deverell. It would be useless *now* to remind you that Lady Georgina expects you to-morrow night to her assembly. Adieu! On my soul," added he, in an audible whisper, "I give your taste great credit."

Rage and indignation swelled in Walter's

throat; but he had no time to give them utterance. His lordship had entered one of the hotels, and was out of both sight and hearing. Walter turned to Alice: she was pale and trembling; but she gently drew her arm from his, and mildly said,

"I must go home, Walter. It is not proper for me to be seen by your friends here alone. Never mind, we shall meet another time; but I must go."

Walter had nothing in reason to urge against this; but he was not prepared to reason. He cursed the Earl of Ellerton, aloud and passionately. Alice gently strove to remonstrate, as, again taking his arm, she drew him along with her from the place.

"Why are you so angry with the poor man?" said she, half laughing. "He could not help recognising you."

"But his impertinence, his cursed insolence, in staring as he did at you; and then to *talk* about his dowdy daughter, and *her* assemblies. Hang her! I detest the very thought of her. Besides, I know he thinks he is entitled to treat me in any style his mirth or otherwise may think proper; because, I doubt not, he considers that I am highly honoured by anything he may choose to say or do to me. But I shall teach him that I

am in no way his sycophant; on the contrary, I despise him and his hateful daughter, from the very bottom of my soul."

"Well, well, there is no occasion for expressing your opinion so loudly," said Alice, who had forgotten all other thoughts in the witnessing of Walter's fury. She herself had felt annoyed at the levity of the earl, and the rudeness of his looks; but the anger of Walter so far surpassed all that, in her opinion, the occasion demanded, that the whole affair now appeared almost ludicrous.

By this time, having unconsciously pursued their steps homeward, they now reached the corner of their own street.

"We had better part here," said Walter, "we have no amusing account to give of our proceedings; and it were perhaps as well we were not called on to relate them."

"What! will you not come in then?"

"I have business at Sharpquill's and other places that will detain me until the hour that I must return to dress for dinner. We shall meet again then, and often after. Adieu, Alice! Perhaps it would be as well to say nothing about our meeting to-day."

He pressed the hand of Alice as he spoke, and turning in another direction hurried away.

Alice proceeded almost unconsciously home;

and it was not until she had entered the house, that she recollected she had not made her intended purchase at Covent Garden.

"Why, Alice, you have forgotten the fruit: I told you the last thing, to be sure and remember Covent Garden."

"I forgot," replied Alice. This answer was not absolutely false, but she had not courage to tell the truth. Tacitly, though she knew no reason for it, she had complied with Walter's scarcely uttered hint of secrecy; and it was not till she had time for calmer reflection, that she questioned herself what could be the motive of either.

Thus ended the first interview of love making: an art in which neither were adepts; but few, even the most deeply skilled in the ways of worldly coquetry and idle flirtation, could boast the true feeling, the depth of pure passion, that throbbed in the hearts of both these lovers.

Oh, with what eager and jealous scrutiny did Alice recur in her own mind to every word Walter had uttered during their brief conference! He had said he loved her; but was it real love? He had said she was the dearest being to him on earth; but he did not bid her love *him*, he did not say that none other could ever be dearer. Nothing he had said could imply more than the affection of a brother. Yet hope

whispered there was something more; a something that had breathed in his faltering and impassioned accents, and flashed in the glance of his dark eye. She *did* hope, and that hope, though mingled with fear and uncertainty, cheered her heart with a feeling which seemed to impart a new spring to her existence.

No hours ever seemed to pass so lightly and quickly, as those until the time appointed for Walter's return. He was late, it being near three o'clock before he arrived, therefore he had no time, but was obliged to dress with all speed and set off to the city; having promised to be at Mr. Simkin's early, and now fearing lest he should hardly arrive in time for the appointed dinner hour. But Alice saw him; and, in the present state of her feelings, even a passing sight was enough to add new elevation.

They had no opportunity to converse; but in the glance at parting, in the accent of the common-place "Good bye," Alice read enough to furnish food for blissful visions till their next meeting.

Four o'clock was striking on the numerous church bells, when Walter knocked at the door of 27, Jewin Crescent, Aldersgate. He was admitted by a footman in bright scarlet livery, decorated with a profusion of gold facings which did more credit to the wealth than the taste of

his master. But our hero had soon to learn that the master of this establishment had very little to say in the ruling of its ways and fashions.

Walter was ushered into a splendidly furnished drawing-room, where he was allowed ample time to inspect its contents, until the entrance of the aforementioned footman, who throwing open the door to the widest extent of its hinges, announced, in a tone that might have done credit to the head usher at a route, "Mrs. Simkin, Miss Simkin, Miss Sophia Simkin."

Walter bowed respectively to each of these ladies, but he had no means of introducing himself, a ceremony which proved needless, as the senior of the group, a respectable-looking stout matron, above fifty, dropping an affected congé, said, "Mr. Walter Deverell, I *persume*."

Walter bowed.

"We welcome you as our sister's deliverer," said Miss S., an over-dressed, simpering piece of affectation, who contrived to spoil what nature meant for a pretty face, with all sorts of grimaces that she deemed necessary for fashion.

"Yes," rejoined Mrs. S., who had by this time seated herself on the sofa; her two daughters following her example. "I cannot; we never can, find *vords* to hexpress hour gratitude for your noble conduct."

"Heroic!" exclaimed Miss S.

"Princely!" responded her sister, clasping her hands in an attitude suited to express her adoration.

At this moment, luckily for Walter's modesty, which certainly was put to the blush by these extravagant encomiums, the door opened, and the entrance, unannounced, of Rose and her father, who were just returned from a walk, put an end to the conversation. Mr. Simkin's hearty shake of the hand, and his welcome, accompanied by a reproach for his not coming sooner; and the kind smile of Rose, as she tendered him her pretty little hand, was far more grateful to our hero's proudest feelings, than the over-strained praises of the mother and sisters.

"You see how it is, my lad," said Mr. S.; "I don't stand on no ceremony, if you'd come early as I asked you, I meant you to have gone with Rose and I on our bit of a walk, and we could have made up acquaintance like, before dinner, but as it is all's just as well; we waited a full hour past our usual time, and as you did'nt seem likely to make your appearance, I just stept out ourselves, as Mrs. S. and the two other girls were at home to talk to you, I thought you could'nt take no offence."

"Not in the least. I regret very much not being able to come early as I intended, but business—"

"Oh, all right, I don't doubt; best to look after business, and this an't like Sunday. If I'd thought, I'd not have asked you on a week day; I never like young men to neglect business. Pray, if I may be so bold as to ask, what trade are you apprenticed to?"

"Good gracious! Mr. Simkin, how can you be so wulgar!" exclaimed Mrs. S.; and the two eldest young ladies cast up their eyes.

"No trade, unfortunately," replied Walter; "neither can I say that the business which detained me was of much profit. I am at present a mere student in a profession which I would fain hope may one day occupy my time to better account."

"Ay, ay; a lawyer or doctor, I fancy; but I think I remember you said you had no father or mother. Who was it you said brought you up?"

"My paternal grandfather, to whom—"

"Oh, yes, yes, I recollect; by-the-bye too, I think I know some little about him. West Hall is the name of the place he lives at, an't it?"

Walter assented.

"Ay, ay, just the same. I'm right in my man; but it an't *I* just exactly that knows him, but a friend of mine, Alderman Watkins, who had occasion to meet him once, many years ago,

when Alderman Watkins was Coroner for the county of Middlesex; but that was before your time, and we need'nt talk about it."

Walter felt little inclined to talk about it, for the well-meaning Mr. Simkin had unconsciously touched a painful chord in his feelings by the mention of the "*Coroner*," for there was little doubt that he adverted to the unfortunate death of his father, an event which stung Walter's heart with many painful associations. How far Mr. Simkin might be informed on that subject, or how far his remark might proceed from curiosity, Walter did not care to question.

"An't we to have no dinner at all, Sukey?" said Mr. S., turning to his lady.

"Really, Mr. S.," exclaimed she, reddening to a hue of rage, "I can't hunderstand how you will continue to dare to haddress me by that 'orrid name. If it has been my misfortune to be called Susan, which is certainly bad enough, I can't see why you persume to make it more so. I tell you I shan't hendure it; I am determined I shall not."

"Well, well, my dear, don't put yourself in a passion about that; I shan't call you anything but what you like; only you must allow a little for habit, if one may make a mistake now and then. I called you Sukey when I courted you, and I never remember your making any objection

then ; but times and fashions are changed since then. But after all, aren't we to have any dinner? it's half-past four."

"I have told you a thousand times, Mr. Simkin, that it's quite *hout* to 'ave dinner at *the hour* just; besides, when one has French cooks and confectioners, one must allow them to take their *hown* time; besides, I 'ave nothing to do with the dinner. If you are very hanxious, Mr. S., you can ring the bell for my *matter de hottell*, perhaps he'll be able to tell you."

Mr. Simkin rose and quitted the room, but whether with the intention of doing what was proposed or not, it did not appear.

"Really, Mr. Deverell," said Mrs. Simkin, the moment the door was fairly closed on her *caro* spouse, "I must beg you will not mind what Mr. S. either says or does. I am perfectly shocked at his wulgarity. Good gracious, only think of hasking what *trade* you were! I declare the girls and I are fit to die for shame at the way he will go on. It can't be 'elped; he is so hobstinate, you can't think. He will hinsist on talking just as he likes, and doing just as he pleases: it is really quite shocking."

"Dreadful!" echoed both the young ladies, Rose having long ago quitted the room.

"Yes, and what is a deal worse," pursued the lady, "he will hallways hinterfere with me; and

all I do, it is with the greatest difficulty that I can get anything managed as I wish it; and would you believe it, he hobjected to me 'aving a governess to the girls, although hany person of common sense must be haware that it is absolutely necessary to any ladies of fashion; and really the way he treats poor Mamosell de Courcey is quite dreadful—isn't it, Louisar?"

"Oh, perfectly shocking!" replied the young lady.

"Yes, and what's *vorse* too, he has quite spoilt Rosa, and has got her to agree to all his notions, and the girl is habsolutely ruined. Good gracious! she really refused when I bade her practise the gallopade waltz with *Musshe* des Cartes the other morning, when Sir Thomas Hosky and his lady, and their two sons, called."

"Oh, Rosa is habsolutely wulgarised!" said Miss Simkin, in a tone of despondency.

"Yes, indeed she is; and I daresay you, Mr. Deverell, havn't failed to observe what a great difference there is between her and her sisters?"

Indeed Walter had not failed in that observation, for he was making it internally at that very moment; but had he expressed it aloud, the balance of favour would have been found on a very different scale from what the present company believed it to be. The dinner-bell summoned them down stairs; and Walter offering his arm

to his hostess, who resigned it in favour of both daughters and led the way, they all proceeded to the dining-room.

Mr. Simkin was already at the foot of the table, sharpening at his carving-knife with great eagerness, as he prepared to do justice to a huge sirloin of roast-beef which stood before him. Rose was putting an ottoman footstool at his feet, and, as she rose up from her stooping posture, her colour heightened; and having changed her close walking dress for a simple, but tasteful white frock, Walter again drew the comparison between her and her sisters, the result of which was far from flattering to the latter.

"Goodness me! what can have delayed Mamosell de Courcey!" exclaimed Mrs. S., glancing round, after all the company was seated. "She is usually punctual."

"Stopt up stairs to dress herself, I fancy," said Mr. Simkin. "She always takes an hour extra to that when any one's coming—that's to say," added he in a muttered tone, "if it's any *man*."

"I really *hentreat* of you, Mr. S.," exclaimed his lady, "that you will refrain from hany of your remarks on that haccomplished and hamiable person. I particularly wish that Mr. Deverell may be permitted to judge for himself. Mam'selle de Courcey is a most excellent young

person," said she, addressing herself to our hero; "I hassure you, I had the 'ighest recommendations with her; she was governess to Lady Hosky's daughters, who are most fashionable girls—quite the *haut ton*, I assure you; and poor Mam'selle de Courcey is a charming person. I can't say much for her beauty," added she in an arch whisper, "but one don't care for that in a *governess;* but she is 'ighly accomplished, and deeply learnt. And what is surprising, though a French woman by birth and heducation, she speaks *Hinglish* without the least of foreign haccent—don't she, Sophy?"

"Charmant!" replied the young lady; and the footman announced the object of the conversation at the moment; and as Mademoiselle de Courcey entered, Walter, to his surprise, beheld his quondam acquaintance the nymph of the bandbox, whom our readers may remember he rescued from the disputed claims of the omnibus. It was evident that the recognition was mutual, but its effect on the lady was rather surprising. Instantly averting her glance from our hero, she became deadly pale, and was unable even to return the salutation requisite on the introduction of our hostess. It was necessary to pass the back of our hero's chair before she could reach her own vacant seat; and as she passed, a portion of her dress got entangled on it, and, from politeness,

he was obliged to assist in disengaging it. As he stooped for that purpose, she whispered in his ear—"For God's sake don't recognise me!" and passed on to her seat.

The words were so rapidly and inaudibly uttered, that Walter almost doubted if he had really heard them, or (if the expression of the lady's countenance had not spoken so plainly) that fancy had framed the sentence. It was evident no other person had heard it, for no one seemed even to have noticed the change in the countenance of Mademoiselle, and she seated herself composed and smiling at her place. Walter had no inclination to claim their former acquaintance, even had she appeared anxious to do so, therefore he felt relieved that she showed no *animus* to recognition. He was, however, a little disconcerted when, turning to Rose Simkin who sat next him, he perceived a smile on her face of rather too arch an expression, to suit the present state of his feelings. Was it possible that she had overheard the whisper?—more than probable, for she sat next to him, and the other vacant place was now occupied by Mademoiselle herself. However, it could not be helped; besides, what did it signify? and why should an arch smile on Rose Simkin's face disconcert him? The fact was, that Rose was a very pretty girl, and Walter thought her such; and no man likes to

be laughed at by a woman he admires—it is even worse than being disliked.

Rose Simkin, or Rosa, as her more elevated mother and sisters chose to term her, was certainly a pretty girl—plump, fair, and smiling as a cherub, with an expression of natural good humour in her pretty features, that was more charming than even their symmetry. Her eldest sister was pretty also; but over-dressing and affectation totally buried the graces of nature. The second, Miss Sophy, was decidedly plain, and either fancying she was, or really being in ill health, she was anything but attractive. A pretty woman may interest for a time as an invalid (although even beauty wearies, if for ever languishing), but a plain woman ought never to be sickly: all her charms consist in animation, conversation, and bestowing rather than requiring attention.

In this circle, therefore, Walter had little to divide his interest in Rose; and, although he regarded her with perfect coolness, it was impossible to do so with indifference. We do not mean to say, that even though his heart had been wholly disengaged, Rose Simkin would have won it, but certainly he did not look on her without admiration.

A challenge from his host to take wine with him, reminded Walter of his remissness in not

having pledged any of the ladies, and he hastened to—"beg the honour,"—to fill two glasses, lift his own, touch it with his lips, and bow to Miss Simkin, who sat opposite to him.

"I daresay Vest-All is a wery delightful place in this fine veather, Mr. Deverell?" said Mrs. Simkin, after a pause which had occurred.

Walter was perfectly confounded by this extraordinary transposition of aspirations, and it was not until a whispered reproof from Miss Sophy caught his ear, of

"Dear Ma', how dreadfully you haspirate the H!" that Walter at last comprehended the meaning of the sentence sufficiently to reply to it.

"Yes, Madam: any part of the country is most pleasant during summer." Miss Sophy sighed.

"I am glad to hear you say so," pursued Mrs. S., glancing a look of triumph at her husband. "I am wery glad to hear any sensible person agree with me, that the country is the most fitting—indeed, the only place that any human creature ought to live in during summer; and I declare it is a perfect scandal, with the fortune that Mr. S. possesses, that he will hinsist on cooping us up for ever and ever in this hodious, 'orrible city! Indeed it is; and considering Sophy's 'ealth too, and the doctor hordering change of hair—it is worse than shameful!—it is perfectly sinful!—isn't it, Madamoiselle?"

"Indeed it is, ma ladie--scandalous in the extreme—barbareux; but, in all probability, Mr. Simkin will at last be brought to relent, and permit you to indulge in those delices which are so unjustly withheld from you."

"Won't you let me send you another slice of beef, Mr. Deverell," said Mr. S., without taking the least notice of the foregoing speeches.

"I'ts of no use talking, Ma'," exclaimed Miss Sophy, in evident choler; "I am resigned to my fate: surely nothing worse can happen than death, and I trust I am fully prepared to meet *that*."

Mrs. Simkin wiped her eyes, and cast an indignant look at her husband, who seeming to think silence was his best defence, continued to eat his dinner as coolly as if nothing had happened.

"I wish," said Mademoiselle, with a simper, "I wish Mr. Simkin would consent to let the young ladies have a summer at Paris. I am sure they would all be perfectly renovated—not to mention health; but in all their manifold accomplishments, and every mental improvement, I am certain Paris would work a miràcle, even with Madamoiselle Rosa." Madamoiselle Rosa smiled, and Walter, whose eyes had involuntarily turned towards her, thought there was an expression of irony in the smile.

"There, Mr. Simkin," exclaimed his lady triumphantly; "you always object to the country, on account of what you call its dulness. I'm sure Paris hasn't that fault. *Do* now just be accommodating for once. Mam'selle here has been giving us all such a charming account of Paris ——."

"Oh do, Pa'," exclaimed the young ladies, both at once; "*do* go to Paris, it would be so very delightful."

"Mrs. S.," said her husband, after a pause, "till these last five years, I used to give you credit for being a woman of some common sense at least; but now I declare I think that's not only all gone, but, 'pon my soul, I believe you're literally gone crazy. But I'll tell you what it is, I'd as soon walk as far into the Thames, at Blackfriars bridge, as I'd ever think of setting my foot on French land; so that's ay and no at the first; and, what's more, I think every one who would leave his own native country, to visit any dirty *froggy land*, in the whole universe, deserves to be *kicked back* to it. Paris, indeed! no, I thank you; as long as it pleases God that I keep my sight and senses, I'll never set foot out of old England, while I've a breath left to draw on her shore!—so here's long life to her; fill your glass, Mr. Deverell, and join me—

'King and Country for ever—and confusion and shame to Paris!'"

"I fear I can hardly join in the latter part of your toast, sir," said Walter, laughing, as he filled his glass; "for the reason that I intend to visit Paris myself very soon, and must consequently share in its shame and confusion."

"What, you don't mean to say so?"

"Dear, you don't mean to say so?" exclaimed Mrs. Simkin and the ladies, at the same time; but evidently with very different sentiments.

"Yes; but mine is not wholly a visit of pleasure; but though business is the principal motive, I nevertheless expect much amusement, and consequently instruction, in a visit to the country, and acquaintance with its manners and inhabitants."

"I should like to see Paris very much," said Rose; "but, as I fear I am not likely ever to do so, I must content myself by loving England, and fancying it to be superior to all other nations, as it would be useless to indulge in discontent." This was the first time Rose had spoken during dinner; and her sisters, and the governess, glanced at her with expressions that plainly spoke their contempt of her resignation.

"Oh, as to Mademoiselle Rosa," exclaimed the latter, "she is a perfect savage, *une barbareuxe*.

Only think, Monsieur Deverell, she says she prefers a morning walk, on Hampstead Heath, to the charming and picturesque view from Richmond Hill, or the delightful rambles of the vicinage of its exquisite park!"

"Nay, Mademoiselle," said Rose, good-humouredly; "you condemn my taste without relating the circumstances which probably influenced the preference. I certainly *did* prefer *a* morning walk, which I took on Hampstead Heath, to *a* day we spent at Richmond; but the former took place on a very fine day, when I was very well, and in very good humour, and with very pleasant company; while the latter, though a fine morning when we set off, turned out a very showery day. During the whole of our *voyage* there I was obliged, by reason of a very bad cold, to keep below in the cabin, even between the showers, for fear of the damp, and there I was surrounded by good folks, all very pleasant in their way I have no doubt, but utterly unknown to me; and when we arrived, feeling much worse, I could not enjoy dining in a close-crowded room, at the Eel-pie-house, from which we all afterwards issued, and each of the party considered it necessary to pelt the other with very wet hay, in order to be *rural*."

An involuntary and hearty laugh from Walter, at this defence, somewhat disconcerted the op-

posite party, and summoned a ready blush to Rose's cheek, whose natural good humour sought rather to excite a joke than maintain an argument.

"Rosa," said her mother, in a tone of dignity, "I desire you won't hindulge in such hungenteel conversation. It may be hall wery vell in your mind, but it is wery improper of any young lady to go on in such a manner."

"I am entirely of your opinion, madame," said Mademoiselle de Courcey, evidently put out of temper by Walter's laugh; "and I think Mademoiselle Rosa is by far too gay, by far too self-opinionative, for a young lady of her accomplishments."

"Not a bit—not a bit, Rosa, my girl," interrupted Mr. Simkin; "and I desire that every person at my table be permitted to express their mind perfectly freely—so shall I as long as I live, and I quite agree with Rosa on the Richmond affair—and so I well may, for I an't got the better of the effects of it to this good hour and day. Sitting on the nasty damp grass, I caught such a cold, that I fairly thought would have been the death of me; and the rheumatism in my left hip, that pains me this very minute;" and, as he spoke, Mr. S. applied his hand to the place affected.

"Oh yes, no doubt," said Miss Sophy; "you

and Rosa agree in all things: and why not? she was *always* your pet."

"And I'm sure we all wish you good of your opinions," responded Miss S., "only its a great pity one must be obliged to submit to them, although you don't like any place; but this horrible odious city of London, I don't see why *we*, who have more refined tastes, ought to be forced to remain in it, because you choose to do so."

"Most justly observed, ma chere Louisé," said Mamselle. "I don't see the reason at all why your papa won't consent to let your mamma, and you *two*, go to Paris: *why*, surely, Mamselle Rosa could be housekeeper; *she* understands and likes all that sort of thing better than Mamselle Louisé, or her sister; and I'm sure he might spare you, if it were only for one reason. Why, I declare, it is quite impossible for any young lady, however well educated at home, to be quite complete, unless she has a *season* of Paris."

"The living is much cheaper at Paris than it is here; is it not, Mr. Deverell?" asked Mrs. S., anxious to urge what she often found a successful point.

"I may be able to tell you by this time twelvemonths," said Walter; "but, at present, I am perfectly ignorant."

"I can assure you of the truth, though," eagerly exclaimed Mademoiselle; "for I am personally acquainted with several families of distinction. English families, who have gone to reside permanently at Paris, merely for the great difference of expence; not for the sake of avarice, but because they can afford to keep up a style there at a very moderate expense, which would ruin the fortune of a prince, if attempted in London."

"There, Mr. S.," exclaimed his lady, triumphantly. "You're halways a grumbling about the hexpence of keeping the carriage, and hall the most necessary things. What do you think of that? we'd never trouble you for money there, and we'd be hable to live twice as 'ansomely. Come now, just be reasonable—let us go to Paris, we can at least give it a trial; and then, after hall, if you don't like it, vy we can only come home again."

"Lord bless you, my dear," exclaimed Mr. S., in a tone of compassion; "why I really begin to think you must 'ave gone out of your mind, out and out: and would you really propose to think of leaving old England, to take up house, and spend your days in a country where they eat frogs, and talk in an houtlandish tongue through their noses. Well, upon my word, if any one had told me Sukey Tomkins would have turned

out such a downright fool, I'd be hanged if I'd ever had a word to say with her. Why lord love you, woman, where was you brought up? ay, and born too, but in the good old City of London;—and your father afore your day, who was as respectable a tradesman as was in the whole of Aldgate,—and a common councilman too—besides making a fortune as a cheesemonger; and didn't he live all his days in London?—ay, and died here too; and where else ought you to live and die? I'll tell you what it is, you may just go wherever you please, but take notice, you go on your own expense: set up the whole affair yourself; but, mind, let it be on your own *bottom*—I'll have nothing to do with it; ay, and what's more, I'll adwertise to that effect,—I don't deceive you—so that's enough; and I'll abide by what I say, else my name's not Humphrey Simkin, and I wasn't thirty years a tallow-chandler, in the Barbican, for nothing."

Having concluded this speech, which was begun with great calmness and contempt, but towards the end waxed warm with anger and vexation, Mr. Simkin filled his glass, and quaffed a bumper of port, with the air of a man determined to abide by what he has said.

Miss Sophy started from the table, and at the mention of the *tallow-chandler*, burst into tears,

and hurried out of the room. Her elder sister and mademoiselle hastened after her, uttering loud exclamations of sympathy and indignation, while Mrs. S., rising with due dignity, and casting a look of horror and reproach at her husband, walked out of the room, after exclaiming, "There, you cruel man, see what you have done —you will certainly be the death of your hunfortunate family."

Rose followed this last *exit* with evident mortification expressed in her face; so evident that sympathy for her, mingled in the *inward* mirth which Walter would otherwise have felt at this most ludicrous scene.

"There they go," exclaimed Mr. Simkin; "let 'em go, and be —— to them; but it's that dirty jade of a *governess,* as she calls herself, that's the cause of it all. I fairly wish she was hanged, or anywhere but in my house. Isn't that a fine kick up at a decent man's table, Mr. Deverell? ay, and isn't it a fine thing to think that I must pay a hundred a year, and feed, and clothe that 'ere dirty serpent as causes it all? But out she shall tramp, bag and baggage, or I'm not myself;—I'll see if I'm to be made a nincompoop of in my own house, by a beggarly trull like her:—but fill your glass, Mr. Deverell, and let's say no more about it. They've had their dinners, and let them come to the des-

sert if they like, and, if not, stop away. I'm sorry for Rose, poor thing, she never likes to see me put in a passion; and she hasn't a dog's life herself, poor girl, because she don't care to chime in with all their absurdities. Rose is a good sensible girl—'pon my word she is—she's more sense than the whole on 'em put together."

Walter secretly and heartily agreed in that opinion, but he judged best to say nothing; and Mr. S. changed the conversation to other subjects, and amused himself, during an hour or so, in questioning our hero about his birth and parentage, and the future prospects of his life.

"I'll tell you what it is, young man," said he, after he had obtained pretty nearly all the information Walter could give, "I'll tell you how it is—maybe's you'll be thinking it rather prying of me to be asking so many questions; but the fact is, I've taken a fancy to you: and, to tell you the truth, I'm heartily sorry (though I oughtn't to be so) to find that I can't be of no service to you. If you'd been a poor lad, I'd meant to have taken you by the hand. I told Rose so yesterday after we parted with you. I'd have made something of you; for between us, though I don't care for boasting to every one, there isn't one in the freedom of the city, in the whole parish of Aldgate, and that an't a small one, who has realised an 'andsomer fortune than

myself. I've given up business, though it was the best in the whole line. I've put a poor lad, the orphan son of an old friend, in my shop. So much for him, and I hopes he'll do well in it; but as for yourself, to tell you the truth, I meant to offer you the choice of any business you might like best, or fancy most thriving. I did, I assure you. Of course, I concluded, that at your time of life, it was most likely you had already served an apprenticeship to some trade or other; but, if it had suited better, I meant to propose an excellent business, the good-will of which I was offered the other day, at a very reasonable sum; the business of a tobacconist, formerly carried on by a good friend of mine, Mr. Hodges, of Milk-street, Cheapside, who is giving up trade 'cause he is getting old, and has enough to make him comfortable. But, as it turns out, you don't need for my assistance like; but you have my good-will all the same; and if it should turn out, for there's many ups and downs in this life, if it should so happen that you may stand in need of a friend, look you! Humphrey Simkin, his purse, and his good wishes are at your service."

Walter scarcely knew how to reply to this unexpected, but well-meant speech. He thanked Mr. Simkin, or rather, would have done so, but the latter prevented him with—

"Come, come, now, no thanks is merited.

One don't need to be paid for good intentions; you saved my life, and I don't want you to tell me you won't be obliged in turn. It's no use talking now, but should the time ever come when you want a friend, one who can be of any service, try me; just try me, and see whether I've been talking without meaning what I say."

Walter returned the hearty pressure of the good citizen's hand, who extended it towards him; and gave his promise to claim his friendship before that of any other, should he ever require it; and, at the old gentleman's request, Walter left him to finish his bottle of port, and proceeded as directed to the drawing-room: "to see what the girls were about, and do his best to put all in good humour."

An offer of friendship kindly made, seldom fails to obtain a place in a young heart; and however indifferent, or even repulsive the person who proffers it has been before, the instant he enters in the lists of friendship, he claims an interest, and a place in the affections. A friend is always a valuable acquisition, another being added to the number who care whether we sink or swim in the ocean of existence. Yet, alas! in prosperity and happiness, we often reckon on a wide circle of such beings, whom in adversity and misfortune, we look around for in vain. Yet

it is not always so; there are a few warm hearts, a few noble and generous beings, ready to stand by us in misfortune. Oh! may such ever be rewarded by gratitude and love!

Walter was not one to be insensible of kindness. He had few to love him, therefore his heart was open to any who chose to claim a place in it; and the kind-hearted Mr. Simkin no longer appeared conspicuous for his eccentricities or follies, all of which were forgotten in his goodness. Insensibly, too, the family had now become more interesting, and Rose not the least so.

On entering the drawing-room, he found no person there but Rose herself, who was leaning her head on her hand, and her elbow resting on the piano, which was open. She started as he entered; and, as she looked up, Walter observed, that she had been in tears. She hastily endeavoured to conceal them, and with an assumed smile, addressed him with some common-place remark. Walter replied, but a pause immediately ensued, and both seemed at a loss how to break the silence.

"You seem out of spirits," said Walter, as she turned away, evidently occupied by some unpleasant reflection, "I hope you are not unwell."

"Not in the least," replied Rose, smiling with

a frankness which showed she was not displeased by the question, "only a little annoyed, if you ever felt such—"

"Yes, more than once, I assure you."

"And, perhaps, you have felt so to-day?"

"On the contrary, I have had no cause of annoyance."

"Well, perhaps you have been amused," said Rose, again smiling; "for in a scene like what occurred, a perfectly disinterested spectator must be either annoyed or amused; and, when I now think coolly of the whole affair, I begin to think it was rather ludicrous than vexatious; but I conclude you understand what I allude to,—namely, the absurd disputes that took place, and so very *absurdly*, rendered your dinner, doubtless, very disagreeable."

"Not in the least; nay, when I say so, I mean —not on my own account, but for your sake, I would have wished it had not occurred; yet such things, you know, *will* happen."

"And I know you think us all very foolish people, and me not the least so for being sitting here, crying about an occurrence, at once laughable and contemptible," said Rose, with her frank smile, which pleaded more than an excuse for her homely phrase and simple subject; "but after all, I *do* plead guilty to being very uncom-

fortable, when such foolish scenes occur before any one who is a stranger to the real characters of the *actors*. I love my mother and sisters too sincerely, not to regret that any one should receive a false impression of them; for, notwithstanding these absurd whims, which they are weak enough to *affect*, rather than indulge, they are, I assure you, naturally good-intended, kind-hearted, and sensible. All they require is, to be persuaded that these real qualities are *fashionable*, and none would more anxiously and truly display them."

Walter impulsively took her hand, which rested on the table as she spoke,—"and could not one whose eloquence pleads so ably in their defence, persuade them of the justice of her good suggestions?"

Rosa smiled, and as she withdrew her hand, the motion was neither hasty nor angry—

"I fear," said she, "my opinion has not much weight, but, perhaps, my influence may succeed through another medium. You, Mr. Deverell, have already conferred a lasting obligation on us, by having saved the life of my father and myself; but it is still in your power to render us more your debtor,—that is to say, if it is not too much to ask you to exert yourself again for *one*—for those you have already done so much for."

"Nothing could be enough, when I am repaid by your smile," exclaimed Walter, forgetting his self-command for a moment, then suddenly checking himself, he bowed respectfully, and added, "nothing could be enough, when it is in my power to be of service to those who have proffered friendship and confidence to *me*."

Rose turned away her head for a moment, and the colour which had heightened on her cheek during the conversation, now deepened to a blush which tinged her neck, and even the tips of her white shoulders with crimson.

"I am too hasty, I fear, too forward," said she, "in thus speaking so freely to a stranger, on subjects which, though they interest *me*, can only weary and harass you; but, I don't know how or wherefore; perhaps, the intrepidity of your conduct yesterday, perhaps the—I know not what led me to hope—"

Here the door opened, and Mrs. Simkin, followed by her two daughters, and their governess, bringing up the rear, with a bottle of hartshorn and water, entered, and put an end to the conversation. What Rose hoped, or what she might have said, was doomed to remain a mystery to Walter, for that evening, at least; for her instant pause, and a motion of her finger to her lips, warned him to silence; and the remainder

of the evening passed without another opportunity of renewing the subject. Music and Italian songs by the elder misses and mademoiselle, occupied almost the whole time of Walter's stay. As he was no scientific judge, the performance afforded him but little entertainment; but, towards the close, he was amply rewarded by one single song from Rose, who, at the solicitations of our hero, backed by the absolute command of her father, took her seat at the piano, where she accompanied herself in the simple melody of "Wilt thou say farewell, love?"

Walter's praises were not silent, but he felt more than he expressed. At length the time of departure arrived, and still uninformed, Walter had to bid adieu to his mysterious and pretty confidant. In her parting smile there was something of significance, but not a word, not a sign escaped her as she bade "good-bye," and Walter departed with unsatisfied curiosity, and excited interest.

Mr. and Mrs. Simkin had both joined in kindly inviting him to revisit them, but they did not offer to appoint a day, though Walter anxiously hoped they would have done so; therefore his meeting again with Rose was put off to an indefinite time.

What could be the request she was to make?

What could have tempted her to place confidence in so utter a stranger? Vanity whispered suggestions, which calm sense and reflection despised. But, be that as it may, Rose Simkin had excited no small degree of interest in the mind of our hero; consequently, he felt flattered to think she had not regarded *him* with utter indifference.

When he reached home, he was welcomed by Alice, whose smile and address were even kinder than usual; but, as he looked anxiously in her face, he thought he observed traces of dejection, and for the first time his conscience reproached him as the cause. The thought was anguish, and he felt that he could have died for her sake. There was little opportunity to speak to her that night: the welcome on his arrival was quickly succeeded by the "Good night!" and the moment she quitted the room, Walter hurried to his bed-chamber.

A sense of self-accusation, a feeling almost of guilt, had taken possession of his mind; and why, he knew not. Surely this was not the first time he had seen Alice looking sad; but it certainly was the first time he had occasion to suspect himself as the cause.

The image of Rose Simkin, and the feelings which for a moment he had suffered himself to indulge towards her, now appeared to his mind

with the bitterness of regret. He loved Alice; and, although others might awaken a temporary interest, none could ever usurp her place in his heart, and he felt it almost a perjury to have even thought of another. Such is the sincerity of a youthful heart. Alas! the world and its habits soon rid us of such scrupulous morality.

CHAPTER II.

Some days after the events of our last chapter, Walter entered the parlour, where Alice was seated at work alone, and put an open letter into her hand, which she received and read without speaking.

"Well, what do you say to that, Alice?" said Walter, after a pause, during which Alice still held the letter in her hand, but was now refolding it with much minuteness, and examining the seal with an apparent interest, in which, however, it was easy to detect she sought only for an excuse from either speaking or holding up her head.

"Nothing—oh, nothing," replied she, as Walter again repeated the question; "nothing, you know, need be said now. When do you go?"

"As soon as possible; you see, *he* advises me to do so."

Alice was more busy than ever, looking at the seal and folding the corners with exact minuteness.

"Wherever I go," added Walter, with a sigh, "the remembrance of the happy years I have spent here can never be effaced; nor can any

other scene, however alluring, be so dear as this, which, I may justly say, has been my only home. And you, Alice," here his voice faltered, "you have promised not wholly to forget me; do you still think you can engage to keep your word?"

Alice looked up for a moment, then, covering her face with her hands, burst into tears. She rose hastily, and would have quitted the room; but Walter eagerly caught her in his arms, and detained her.

"Alice! dear, dear Alice!" he passionately exclaimed, as she again sank down on her seat, and he pressed her unresisting form to his bosom. "Oh, do not weep, Alice; you are the dearest being to my existence, the only one who renders that existence dear. Forgive me! Oh, wretch that I am, I have wounded the only heart that cares to feel for me."

"Oh, Walter! be calm, do not speak thus," said Alice, terrified into composure by the wildness of his tones, and the violence of his embrace; "rather let me ask your forgiveness for my foolish weakness. Do not detain me; I am only foolish; I shall be better presently."

The rebel tears flowed in spite of her efforts to repress them; and eagerly, but gently, she struggled to release herself from the grasp of Walter, who with one arm round her waist still withheld her from departing. Had even tears

come to his relief, Walter's proud heart could not have repressed them, though he deemed such emotion unmanly. His brain was burning; his heart swelled to bursting. Suddenly relinquishing his grasp of Alice, he smote his forehead with his clenched hands, as he wildly exclaimed—

"Curses on my wretched head. I have acted the part of a villain!" Then, turning to Alice, with a face whose ghastly paleness was a fearful and sudden change from his former vehemence of manner, he extended his hand to her as, with hurried and broken accents, he spoke, "Farewell, Alice. Oh! forgive—forget me. I have wronged you by thus causing you pain for one, who can never, never, repay it by conferring aught of happiness. No, no—do not touch me. I could not, I will not again clasp that hand. Oh, Alice! I am rash—foolish—mad, surely, or something worse. I asked you just now to remember me; but I recal that request. We must part; and it is enough if I am permitted to recal your image. Forget me; do not think on me. We may meet again; but I can never be aught of value to you; do not let my shadow darken your sunshine. Nay, look not so sadly and reproachfully on me; I know your kind heart feels for the companion of your happy days.

We have been *friends ;* if we ever meet again, we *shall* still be *friends ;* but, till then, if that ever be, it were better for you to forget me. Adieu ! God bless you, Alice ! This is not our last parting ; but that is near ; and we—*I* must meet it with calmness and reason."

Alice remained, during the utterance of those words, fixed and silent. Her tears ceased to flow, and the very current of her blood seemed to stand still. There was a wildness and incoherency in his manner, which shocked and terrified her ; but it was evident he wished to hold no claim on her heart. He had yielded at first to the excitement of emotion ; but he had conquered and rejected it. *He* had repressed his feelings, and could *she* indulge in hers ? Shame, self-respect, and woman's pride, froze all the passionately-awakened agitation of her heart. She felt, and could now have acted with perfect reason and coldness. She could now have promised to be his *friend.* She placed her hand in his, which was again extended. It was long, long since she had felt his pressure with so little emotion, and long since he had pressed her hand so slightly. Yet he looked earnestly in her face, and his lip quivered, as if with some accents which he hesitated to utter.

"You are right," said Alice, in a calm and

unmoved tone; "we can surely bid good bye to each other without childish emotion; but you, who know all my weakness so well, can plead my excuse to yourself. This is not the first time you have seen me cry, with very little cause; but I must make amends. You will be hurried in packing up, and, I dare say, I shall be able to assist you a little; do not let me hinder you now. Doubtless, you are anxious to proceed to make arrangements."

As she spoke, she returned the shake of the hand, freely and kindly; but there was no appearance of emotion in look, tone, or accent. To have looked at and listened to her now, no one could have believed that, scarcely a few minutes before, she had been overcome by the excess of emotion.

Walter departed. He was now fully convinced that he held no place in her *love*, and, consequently, no longer need blame himself as causing her pain; but, if self-accusation was bitter, the present consciousness was far more so. The conviction, which, not an hour before, he had deemed to be necessary to his peace of mind, had now rendered him utterly wretched.

As, wrapt in a reverie of unpleasant reflections, he was proceeding along Piccadilly, a voice calling him by name, arrested his progress; and

the sudden stoppage of a splendid equipage, showed him the speaker, who was no less a personage than Lady Georgina Ellerton; who, with three other young damoiselles of fashion, were seated in an open carriage.

"A pretty fellow you are, Mr. Deverell," said her ladyship, extending her gloved hand to him, as lifting his hat he drew near the door of the carriage; "and so you wanted to be off from recognising me, but I have caught you; you are the very man we want. Open the door, James,—now step in—not a word, for we are all to drive to Madame Malibran's morning concert; and, as we have not got a beau, you *must* come with us."

"I fear," replied Walter, as he voluntarily relinquished the fair hand that he held, "I must behave very ungallantly to your ladyship in this instance. Business commands my attention, and we must prefer the useful to the sweet."

"Nay, you are always ungallant, but I shall not let you off this time. You were not present at my assembly last evening, therefore you must atone for *that*. Come, come, you shan't get off *incognito*. Lady Mary Marlow, Mr. Deverell; the same truant, and naughty person, whose absence was mentioned last night in such terms of reprobation. Lady Ellen and Lady Kitty Cleveland, Mr. Deverell; so now you have no

excuse for not being our *cavaliere servente*, so jump up, we shall be too late for the concert."

"Pardon me! your ladyship *must* excuse my attendance on you, and your friends, for this morning, at least. To-morrow I shall wait on you with apologies, which, I am sure, you even will deem sufficient; but, at present, I am *irrevocably* engaged."

"Well, well, I shan't insist too closely; perhaps it might be *too* hard; but, apropos, if you *are* really in a mind to call to-morrow, let it be after twelve, for *I* go to Almack's this night, therefore I shall be tired out, and won't likely be up till then, and I should like to hear the nature of your intended apologies. By the by, I hope your visit is not 'Pour prendre congé.' Papa was telling me something about Paris, and an intended visit, and a parcel of nonsense. Is it true?"

"I am not sufficiently aware of your ladyship's allusion; but to-morrow I can give ample account of my intended movements."

"Oh well, well, to-morrow must needs be an important day. But, by the by, *Walter*, how came you to forget my note of yesterday? I waited full half an hour, and arrived too late for the *oratorio*."

"There, again, I crave pardon; but the note did not arrive, until a previous engagement, put

it out of my power to have come; and it was too late to send an apology."

In this instance Walter did not adhere strictly to the truth. The fact was, the previous engagement was nothing more than a walk with Alice, which he preferred to attending her ladyship to the opera, otherwise nothing but his own will prevented him.

"Well, I believe, that must be pardoned too; though, after all, you are a sad naughty fellow," said her ladyship, sportively smiting him on the shoulder, with her perfumed cambric handkerchief, which she had knotted up into hard knots, during the conversation.

"But stay, you're not going yet, I have made an engagement for you; but first let me tell you under what circumstances. It is a tissue of most extraordinary, and quite romantic, events. You remember Lady Maskell, she whose favourite lap-dog was drowned that day we went on the boating party—well, she—but, bless us, what's all that crowd about, I wonder!"

"It's a woman fallen down, with a bundle," said Lady Kitty Cleveland, who had raised her glass.

"Dear me, I wonder what makes women fall down; and I wonder, still more, what makes such a crowd run to pick them up—dear, what a bore! they'll quite block up the way. Come, come, let's drive on. We'll be too late for the

concert. Good-bye, Deverell; remember to-morrow; shut the door, James, and tell the coachman to drive fast."

Her ladyship's command, uttered in a loud and decisive tone, was instantly obeyed; and nodding familiarly and smilingly to our hero, who still remained standing on the same spot, where, a moment before, he had leant on the door of the carriage, Lady Georgina lay back on her seat, and the horses drove off at nearly a full gallop.

Glad to get rid of her, by any means, Walter almost blessed the accident which had thus relieved him from the certain infliction of having to remain standing for perhaps half an hour longer, listening and replying to her ladyship's interminable number of nothings.

With that natural indifference with which the inhabitants of a crowded city of necessity regard all accidents, Walter was quietly turning to pursue his way, in an opposite direction from that where the crowd was now fast collecting, when some one exclaimed, "She bleeds! will nobody send for a surgeon?"

These words instantly awakened at once his interest, and appealed to his humanity. It was a woman; and it was a suffering being!

Pushing his way through the crowd, who had collected to gaze, without offering the smallest

assistance, he approached to where the sufferer lay. She had fallen forward on her face, and a heavy bundle lay at a little distance from her; but her head rested on the step of a door, against the stone of which it had too probably struck in her fall; for a stream of blood flowed from her face.

"Would it not be best to send for a doctor, master?" said a tall working man, who stood next her, addressing himself to Walter.

"Certainly; or carry her into the nearest apothecary's shop," replied Walter.

A number of persons, before passive spectators, now pressed forward on seeing a well-dressed person take any interest; and several proffered their services to help to remove her.

"I think she fell down with the weight of that 'ere heavy bundle," said the first speaker, who was the only one who appeared really interested from mere humanity; "and a —— shame it is to let any woman, more 'specially a poor young thing like her, carry a load like that through the crowded streets."

"I think it is more likely she slipped her foot on some bit of orange peel, or gooseberry skin, that careless people throw on the pavement. I was a'most killed, slipping my foot on one, the other day," said an elderly fat cheesemonger, who had stood, during the whole time, with the

utmost coolness, hands in pockets, at the door of his shop, on the step of which the head of the unfortunate female still rested.

Walter now bent over her, and with an effort raised her partly from the ground; when, to his surprise and horror, he discovered in the blood-stained countenance, the well-known features of Betsy Brown. Shocked, and almost stunned, he slackened his hold, and it was only by a sudden and hasty exertion, that he was able to save her from again falling on the pavement.

"Let her alone, young gentleman,' said a stout respectable looking man; "take my word for it the hussy is tipsy."

Walter's blood kindled to fury at this speech. He felt almost impelled to fell the speaker to the earth; but all other feelings gave place to those excited by the state of her who was the cause of all. Raising her up, he carried her in his arms, rapidly, and unassisted; for in the excitement of the moment it hardly cost him an effort.

Luckily a druggist's shop was only a few doors off; and entering, he there deposited his still insensible burden, and hastened to demand the requisite assistance, eagerly working with his own hands to cleanse the dirt and blood from her face.

On examination, it was found she had not sustained such severe injury as was first im-

agined. The blood, so alarming from its quantity, had flowed only from the nostrils; and, although a now blackening and extensive bruise disfigured her forehead, there was nothing to be apprehended of further hurt.

Even in the excitement and confusion of his own feelings, Walter could not help remarking the difference of the reception, and conduct of the people in the shop, from that on the similar occasion of Rose Simkin. It is true, his own dress and outward appearance obtained full respect and sycophancy; but towards his unfortunate companion, there was exhibited a callous indifference,—a coarseness of manner, almost amounting to brutality, that at once shocked and irritated him. On recovering her senses, which were merely stunned by the effects of the blow, Betsy's first conscious glance showed plainly that she recognised her deliverer; but fortunately for both, she had either enough of delicacy, or of prudence, not to display the recognition; and as the hand which chafed her temples came in contact with her own, she pressed it gently, but with a softness that awakened feelings more deep than sympathy in the heart of Walter.

"She is all right now, I'm sure, sir," said the assistant, who stood by, with a phial in his hand, "she'll do famously, if she'd get upon her legs, for she looks a stout one. So, I don't think,

sir, you need give yourself any more trouble about her."

"Silence! with your insolence," exclaimed Walter. Then suddenly checking his momentary irritation, "I should like to speak a few words with this young girl," said he, addressing himself to the master of the shop. "I knew her previous to this, and wish to speak with her before she leaves this shop."

"Oh certainly, certainly—by all means, sir; show the gentleman into the parlour, Hawes: step that way, if you please, sir, my assistant will show you the way."

Hawes, who stepped forward, with a grin on his face, which, though not impeachable, was far from respectful, opened a green curtained glass-door, at the inner end of the shop, and Walter, with Betsy, who followed unbidden, entered the apartment; and, the door being closed, Walter and his unfortunate protége were left alone together. The first proceeding of the latter, was as instantaneous, as it was perplexing. Throwing herself on Walter's bosom, she burst into a flood of tears.

"Come, come, *dear* Betsy," said Walter, kindly returning her embrace; "all this is folly, and will only serve to expose both of us;" for a certain lurking suspicion in Walter's mind

directed towards the green-curtained door, made him rather reluctant to admit of a *scene.*

"Well, well, I won't cry," said Betsy, wiping her eyes, and putting back the golden curls, which had fallen in rather disorderly profusion over her face. "I don't know why it is, but the sight of you always makes me cry; though I am never happy but when I see you. Oh, you can't think how wretched I have been ever since that day I last saw you; for somebody told me you were going to leave the country, and I felt afraid you had gone, without even coming to say good-bye. Though the thoughts of taking farewell almost broke my heart; yet it was worse still, to think you had forgotten me altogether. But is it true you are going away? Is it true that I shall never see you again?"

"There is no chance of your not seeing me again, and often too, Betsy. Indeed I do not see why it should be, for I believe you are the only one who will grieve at parting with me."

"Nay, now, don't say that. It is only to flatter and deceive me; for you can't believe anything of the kind. Why, aren't you acquainted with so many great folks, and high-ladies, who are fond of you, and much kinder to you than poor I have ever had it in my power to be? Ay, ay, don't think I am so silly as

believe that, when I saw you just then, with my own eyes, talking to these fine ladies, in such a grand carriage; and, sure enough, it was staring at them and you, made me slip my foot and fall as I did, that has given you so much trouble. But I'm not ungrateful," said she, taking his hand, and fixing her soft blue eyes, with an expression of affection, on his face. "I am not ungrateful, and I love you as truly and deeply as those, who are able to show it better."

The consciousness of being beloved is so grateful to every heart, that there are few who seek to question the sincerity of those who tell them they are so; but under the present state of Walter's feelings, the words of kindness had a more than human power over him. At the time when, in the bitterness of spleen, he had regarded himself as an isolated and friendless outcast from sympathy, he beheld before him a young and lovely being, whose heart was devoted to him. Drawing her closer towards him, Walter impulsively pressed her to his heart, which was too full to return any reply to her warm-hearted appeal. At this moment the green-curtained door was burst open so suddenly, that Walter had not even time to start from his seat, and the Earl of Ellerton stood before him. A mutual amazement for a moment rooted both to the

spot; at length the earl recovering his self-possession, exclaimed,—

"Gad, Deverell! what brings you here? A girl in the story, too! upon my word you are a pretty fellow!"

"Will your lordship be pleased to sit down? It's a thousand pities your lordship would insist on going into the parlour," said Hawes, with a grin, that showed him delighted with this unexpected recognition; while the apothecary bustled and bowed about the earl, with a ready obsequiousness, that showed him not ignorant either of the rank or person of Ellerton, who was in fact one of his customers.

"I'm devilish tired!" exclaimed the earl, throwing himself on a seat. "Mr. Grimes, be quick if you please with your essence; it was for it I came in as I was passing by. I couldn't think why the devil you would not let me into the room; but I see the secret now." As he spoke, with his glass raised to his eye, he coolly examined Betsy, who had started up on his entrance, and continued to stand in awkward and embarrassed confusion.

"'Pon my word, Deverell, you're no bad judge," said he, laughing. "A little too critical for one of your age, though; soon begun I think, too."

"I think," replied Walter, the colour mounting to his cheeks, and tinging even his temples, "I think your lordship seems to be labouring under a great mistake. My presence here is the result of an accident, and this poor girl in no way merits insult."

"Oh, oh; by no means, very far from it. I was only complimenting your fine taste; as to the lady, perhaps she would be so obliging as be seated, and *we* can make acquaintance with her, and she shall judge for herself as to whether I wish to insult her."

"I fear she would not consider herself worthy of such an honour," replied Walter, proudly, but struggling to appear as calm as possible, for he saw too plainly that any display of feeling would only excite the mirth of the noble peer, who was evidently disposed to obtain amusement from the affair. "But," added he, drawing Betsy's arm within his own, "I consider her worthy of my protection, and she shall have it."

"There's a man at the shop door, brought a bundle, which he says belongs to that young woman," said Hawes, who now re-entered the room which he had quitted, to stand behind the half-open door.

Mortifying as was the whole circumstance, Walter felt almost triumph at this unlooked for

means, which, he doubted not, would be sufficient proof of the story he had to relate. "Perhaps," said he, in a tone somewhat ironical, "Lord Ellerton would favour me by questioning this person, who can give a full account of what might not be credited from me, as to the cause that brought me here."

"Thank you, thank you, very kind; but I'd rather be excused the trouble," replied his lordship, still laughing. "I'll take your word for all about it; and now, better escort your fair charge to her new chaperon. *Apropos*, Deverell," cried he, in a serious tone, as our hero was quitting the room in indignation; "I wish to have a few minutes' conversation with you, therefore you will return here after you have done what is necessary. I shall wait for you."

This request, uttered rather in a tone of command, than anything else, could not possibly be refused without rudeness; especially as Walter had no excuse ready; besides, the habitual respect towards those whose age and experience made them his superiors, rendered it impossible for our hero to outrage politeness towards his lordship; although, under the excited state of his feelings, he felt almost impelled to do so. But he felt much more impelled to knock down the impertinent assistant, who, as he passed through the shop with Betsy leaning on his arm,

followed him with a grin, and almost audible giggle.

"An't this 'ere the same bundle as the young 'oman dropt when she fell?" said a tall man, whom Walter recognised as the humane instigator of his charity. "I pickt it up, or rather, I took it from some rascals who wanted to run off with it; and as I see'd you go into this shop, I made bold to bring it here."

"Thank you, thank you, my honest man," said Walter, pushing some silver into his hand; "Now will you oblige me still more, by running for a hackney coach?"

"With all my heart," replied the man; and ran off towards the stand, which was just across the street. In a few minutes a coach drove up to the door, and Walter handed Betsy into it.

"Better let me tell him to drive you home," whispered he, as he almost lifted her into the seat. "You are tired and ill: never mind the bundle; but, stay; this man will carry it to its destination, if you will tell him where it is."

"The direction is marked on it," replied Betsy. "But what shall I say to my grandmother?"

"Tell her the truth. I shall call on you to-morrow; till then, good-bye; God bless you;" and as he spoke, he closed the door, and bidding the coachman drive to the humble residence of Mrs. Brown, turned to re-enter the shop.

"Will your honour be so good as tell me where I am to take this 'ere bundle?" said the man, stopping him.

"I thought the address was marked on it, friend."

"Yes; but I can't read. Perhaps, if your honour would be kind enough to read it just once out to me, I'll keep it in mind, bravely."

Walter complied: and read aloud the direction, which was written on a card, pinned on the towel which tied up the bundle. As he bent forward a little to decipher it, the man whispered in his ear—

"Do you remember the old house at Battersea? I had your life in my power that night: perhaps mine may be in yours. Remember, one good turn deserves another."

Walter started, as if from a spectre; yet during the utterance of these words, he could not collect his senses even to trust the reality of his hearing. Indeed, so rapidly were they uttered, that he had not time to do so; his lips moved to reply, but the man was gone; he had turned the corner of a street, and was out of sight.

For some moments Walter remained lost in amazement and conjecture. Of the man's face or person, he had not the slightest knowledge; but it was evident he had recognised his; and

these words betrayed the knowledge of a circumstance which, till now, Walter had deemed was unknown to all except himself and another. Under any other circumstances, his impulse would have been to pursue the man, even though he knew it would be barely possible to overtake him; but his present situation was not one to admit of cool reflection; and the streets of London are ill fitted for romantic pursuits; he therefore returned quietly to the shop.

On entering the back parlour, he found the earl busy discussing, with the apothecary, the qualities and properties of various essences, which the man of drugs and phials displayed and puffed to his noble customer. At a look from the earl, the apothecary retired, and Deverell was left alone with his haughty friend, or rather, as he evidently considered himself, his patron.

The earl had seated himself on a chair, and fixing his eyes on Walter's face with a glance of scrutiny, unlike his wonted careless abstraction, seemed to endeavour to read his thoughts. At length, unable to sustain any longer the state of suspense and confusion in which he felt himself, Walter was compelled to break silence.

"I fear," said he, "indeed, I am certain, that your lordship is mistaken; or, rather, that you are not aware of the cause of the true circum-

stances under which I have met you—" Here he paused, looked foolish, and was silent, merely from inability to find words expressive of so ludicrous an excuse as was necessary for such an occasion; and, indeed, scarcely sure if there was any necessity for making one.

"On my word, young gentleman," said the earl, in a tone of pique, "it would seem you think I place great value on your exculpation, since you proffer it before you are attacked; but you must know, when I asked to have a few words with you, it was not my intention either to call your conduct to account, or listen to your explanations; but merely to give you a little good advice, though I am not much in the habit of dispensing that commodity; only, for the sake of your grandfather, who is an old friend of mine, I would bid you be more cautious, or more prudent, in how you spend your time; and still more to be wary of forming connections, which, though vastly amusing at the commencement, are apt to be perplexing before the end."

"It is on that point only, I wish—that I would almost entreat—your lordship to hear my explanation," exclaimed Walter, with much eagerness. "Were your suspicions just, I should be unworthy of your attention; but you wrong me, my—"

"Come, come, Deverell," interrupted his lord-

ship, flattered by his earnestness to vindicate himself, "I do not wish to call you too closely to task. Suppose we say nothing about the past, but only take better guard of the future. You are not ignorant of the high advantages which it is in your power to attain, and which solely depend on your good conduct. As to myself, I am willing to favour you to the utmost latitude; but if any of such doings get talked of, I cannot answer for others. *I* shall never mention a word of this; but should it come to the ears of Lady Georgina, it would go against my conscience to bias the feelings which it would most probably excite. But, it's to be hoped, it will never reach that quarter; and, for my part, I have been young myself, and am willing to give every fair indulgence. But I must wish you good-bye for the present, as I must attend the house. I am already half an hour too late for the debate," said his lordship, rising and looking at his watch, "but I shall look for you to-night at Lady Georgina's ball; she expects you, and you know the hour."

With these words, his lordship nodded adieu, and quitted the room, leaving our hero confused and unable to reply, from his abrupt departure.

What could be the meaning of the earl's words? How was it that *he* considered Lady

Georgina as a party interested in Walter's conduct?

The recollections of his grandfather's often-repeated hints,—the broad insinuations of James Sharpquill, all rushed on our hero's mind; and the real state of the case, before only surmised, appeared plain and certain. Perplexed and exasperated, he felt at first inclined to hasten after the earl, demand an explanation, and declare his own utter independence and indifference of his or Lady Georgina's favour; but a sense of the absurdity of such a proceeding, the probability that he might even be mistaken, restrained his impetuosity. He therefore proceeded coolly to the shop, when, paying the demands of the apothecary, for attendance and trouble, he departed to conclude the business which brought him out, and to return home.

The business consisted solely in making the necessary arrangements for his departure, which he had mentally resolved should take place as soon as possible; but these arrangements, though trifling, required time to complete them. Walter was now more than ever anxious to quit London. He felt too certain that to prolong his stay could only increase the painful feelings which, sooner or later, *must* be overcome. The presence of Alice, unless insured to him for ever, could only embitter his existence, to which he felt her image

must be a sad companion. The conviction, too, that he was indifferent to her, rendered it more necessary that he should endeavour to forget an ill-fated passion, which, when unrequited, can only prove the source of misery.

CHAPTER III.

It was late in the evening, before Walter returned to Caroline-street. When he entered the parlour, it was vacant, an unwonted circumstance.

"Is Mrs. Russell gone out?" inquired he of the servant, who had admitted him, and now followed him into the room to light the candles on the table.

"Missus and Miss Vickery are both gone to spend the evening, and won't be back again till late, I believe."

"And—"

"Miss Alice is at home—she just went up stairs when you knocked. I think she isn't very well, at least, she looked poorly; do you wish tea, sir?"

"No, no, thank you; did you say Mrs. Russel would not come home until late."

"Not likely, sir; at least, she said no. It's to Mr. Gardiner's they're gone. Miss Emma came to fetch them; and I believe there's some company just arrived from the country; and missus told me not to let you wait supper for them. But hadn't you better let me get you

something to eat, or make a cup of tea. Miss Alice bade me ask you, for she won't likely be down stairs to-night."

"No, nothing, thank you," replied Walter; but as the woman still lingered as if expecting him to change his mind, and although Walter had no intentions of doing so, he felt half willing that she should prolong her stay; for in the present state of his feelings, he shrank from the thoughts of solitude. But not encouraged by any further questions, and having drawn the window-curtains, snuffed the candles, and even carefully smoothed every possible part of the table-cover; the woman withdrew closing the door, and Walter had no excuse to bid her stay.

Left alone, his own thoughts unusually irksome, he wished rather to avoid than seek recourse to them; and he looked around vainly, in search of some outward object that might divert him; though fatigued by constant and tiresome exercise during the whole course of the day, he felt it impossible to rest; and, rising, he paced to and fro with constant and motiveless steps.

There was a small room adjoining that where he was, the door of which entered at the further end of the parlour; this apartment was called Alice's study, and she usually spent some hours in it daily, when occupied in reading or writing.

The door now stood half open, and almost unconsciously Walter entered. The candles which burned on the table, almost close to it in the adjoining room, showed the interior distinct, though gloomy. Walter had often entered that little room; but never before had he entered it with similar feelings. It was vacant; at least, *she* who was wont to occupy it was not there, and all looked dreary and desolate to his eyes. There stood her writing-desk, it was shut; but a taper, recently extinguished, stood on the table beside it. The chair was placed as if some person had been seated before the table. A pen, too, had dropt on the floor; and as Walter picked it up, he felt the ink still wet in it. A book lay on the table. He took it up, it was a well-known volume,—an album, or rather, scrap-book, which belonged to Alice, the pages of which were filled with sketches and drawings, many done by himself. Every leaf was associated with the dearest feelings, and many of the happiest hours of his existence. As he turned over the leaves, a paper fell out between them on the floor. Walter picked it up. It was folded, and opening it he saw what appeared to be verses written in pencil. If Walter had paused to consider the morality of the action, it is most probable that, strictly speaking, he might have judged it right to fold up the paper, and replace it between the

leaves, without perusing its contents; but he did not consider at all; and, stepping into the other room, where the candles were burning, he perused what was written on the paper, and to his astonishment, he read his own name. At the head of the page was traced, in Alice's well-known hand,—"To Walter Deverell." With a trembling hand and palpitating heart, he read as follows:—

The dream is fled,—all, all is o'er,
The vision was too sweet to last!
And didst thou say, "we meet no more?"
And couldst thou say, "forget the past?"

Well, I have striven for many a day
To know and serve thy every will;
And couldst thou teach me to obey
In that last wish, I'd serve thee still.

If thou couldst teach me to forget
What once has been, no more to be;
Each blissful hour since first we met,
Oh! I would serve,—would worship thee.

I know full well that we must part,
That dearer ties will soon be thine;
But ah! I know another heart
Can never share thy place in mine.

Love never dies, it cannot fade,
It fastens on the fearful tomb;
Through every ruin time hath made,
Can live and dare fate's darkest doom.

But did I love? Oh! name not love,
The sport of fools, the trifler's theme:
The spell that round my spirit wove
Was sure no vain,—no idle dream.

Yet go,—farewell! and linger not,
For dearer ties demand thy care;
Yes, let this image be forgot,
One thought of thine I would not share.

And oh! when thou art far away,
More sweet shall be each lonely tear;
Than scenes to others glad and gay,
Than joys to me no longer dear.

'Tis sweet to think what hope was mine,
What blissful dreams no more to be;
Farewell! may every joy be thine,
And mine,—sole joy to think on thee.

The paper dropt from Walter's hand, as he concluded reading. Was it then possible, or did his senses deceive him? Did Alice then love, and love him? Again he raised the paper; the hand-

writing, so beloved, and so well known, could never be doubted; and his name, that name, traced in the fondness of love, which ever seeks for every opportunity to look on all that recals the beloved object.

It was evident these lines, breathing of love and sadness, were addressed in secret to him, though never meant to meet his eye. Recovered from his first stupor of astonishment, Walter started up, pressed the sheet to his lips, and kissed it a thousand times in the vehemence of passion. At first he felt almost impelled to fly to seek Alice, to prostrate himself at her feet, and confess the discovery which had thus conferred happiness upon him; but checking himself, he reflected, that such a proceeding would be at once hurtful to her feelings, and even indelicate at such a moment. Chance, and even presumption, on his part, had put him in possession of a secret, certainly never intended for his discovery. Had he a right to, as it were, profit by this discovery, or call it to his aid to assist him in pleading a suit, which, a man who truly loves, can never fail to plead eloquently to the object of his attachment. Besides, gentle reader, even love must yield to the most trifling usages of society. Alice was retired, probably to rest, for it was late, (nearly eleven o'clock) and she had

sought her room, on the plea of indisposition. At such an hour, and under such circumstances, it was, therefore, but ill-fitting to seek her on such an errand. Walter's heart was full, too full of happiness; and he longed for the presence of the only being, who could feel sympathy in that happiness. He read, over and over again, the now almost sacred paper, before he could summon resolution to fold it and replace it where he found it. In doing so, however, he traced on a blank leaf of the album, next which he placed it, the following lines :—

AN ANSWER.

And wilt thou, loved one, think of me,
When distant far I'm doomed to roam ?
And can I hope, whate'er may be,
In thy warm heart to find a home ?

Oh ! plight that vow, too blest, once more,
And let it cheer thy wanderer's heart;
In lonely hours he'll breathe it o'er,
And hope to meet no more to part.

Oh ! wilt thou be the wanderer's star,
On fortune's night to shed thy ray ?
And with thy cheering light afar,
To guide him on his dreary way ?

And may he hope, his hardships past,
When fate's now darkening clouds are flown;
To meet thee still unchanged at last,
And claim and find thee all his own?

After he had finished writing this, he placed it beside that of Alice, and deposited both in the album, which he laid on the table where he had found it; and, taking one of the candles, extinguishing the other, he proceeded up stairs to his own bed-room, but little disposed for rest, as our reader may well conceive. As he passed the door of Alice's room, he paused; all within was silent. Did she sleep? Alas, if her heart indeed throbbed with the feelings she had expressed, sleep was, in all probability, as absent from *her* pillow as it would be from his own.

He proceeded up another flight of stairs, and entering his own room, closing the door, flung himself on a chair, and covered his face with his hands, as if to shut out all save the thoughts that were busy in his brain. For the first time, a thought occurred to him that thrilled his heart with keener anguish, on account of the temporary elevation of pleasure which had for a time warmed it with hope;—it was the thought of his departure, which, in the splenetic and disappointed feelings of that day, he had hastened by every possible means. The fact was, that having

made every necessary arrangement, he had fixed his departure on the morning of the day after the morrow, and had actually taken his place in the Dover mail coach, which was to start at nine o'clock. For the first time, now he repented his hasty proceeding. Just as he had learnt the happy truth, to quit the object of his love! And Alice, when her image recurred to him, a tenderness even unmanly softened his soul. And such a voluntarily hastened departure! would it not wound her feelings, and render more bitter the pang of necessary separation? And did he remain thus cold and silent, while yet undivided by that space which baffles ardent hopes? Wherefore, while the opportunity was in his power,—wherefore not seek her, and declare that passion which her affectionate heart at least merited to know? He started up, opened the door,—his foot was on the first step of the stairs, when he heard a sound which, with that acuteness of the senses which custom renders even the sounds produced by inanimate objects recognizable, he distinguished the wonted sound of the opening of Alice's bed-room door; and the next moment the well-known tread of her light footstep descended the stairs. He still paused, till he heard her enter the parlour and close the door, and then, without even waiting to take the light, he hurried, with a quick step and palpi-

tating heart, down the dark staircase. He again paused when he reached the parlour door. All within was so still, that, but for a ray of light visible through the keyhole, he would have doubted that any one was within. All through the house too was silent, save in the kitchen, where the servant beguiled her prolonged task, by singing loudly and merrily; and her occupation, so self-concentrated, rendered the rest of the house even more lonely. Walter laid his hand on the door, when his attention was arrested by the murmur of voices within, as if more than one person was speaking. He paused. Could it be possible that Mrs. Russel was returned? He certainly had not heard any sound like their arrival or admission. With a breathless anxiety, in which the very functions of life seemed suspended, Walter listened, and distinctly heard the voices of two persons engaged in conversation. One was that of Alice, and the other, low and suppressed, was that of a man! A thrill, like the effect of sudden freezing of the blood, which as suddenly became heated to boiling fever, thrilled through every vein. An impulse to burst into the apartment, dare the intruder, and brand the faithless one with her frailty, was instantly checked by pride, doubt, and a sense of his own utter powerlessness either to demand an explanation

or state an injury. What right, what authority, had he, to question or command any action of Alice's? His trembling frame and flushed cheek told that he could feel and think, even without *right*. But to act? there he hesitated. The sound of both voices was suppressed, as if for fear of being overheard, but, as he stood, that of Alice was raised to a higher pitch, and he distinctly heard her say, "Yet it goes against my conscience to deceive him."

A low, but to Walter's ear contemptuous laugh followed these words; and the man's voice replied something in a whisper that he could not distinguish. At this moment a loud well-known knock announced the arrival of Mrs. Russel. With the impulsive shame of one who dreads even the suspicion of eavesdropping, Walter hurried as quickly and noiselessly as possible up stairs. On reaching the first landing place, he paused, and his heart beat so violently, that he could almost fancy the sound of its throbbings was audible. Slowly, and to him with apparently premeditated delay, the servant came up stairs, and admitted her mistress and Miss Vickery. They entered, and proceeded straight into the parlour, and he distinctly heard Alice welcome them in her usual kind, calm tone. The door was closed, and all sat down, and he heard them conversing and

laughing the same as usual. This was strange! but whoever the stranger was, he had had ample time to conceal himself. The back and front parlour communicated by folding doors; these were always open; but then there was Alice's room—her study; that would afford perfect concealment, and safe, for no person ever entered it but herself. Walter felt his heart beat thick; his very respiration was oppressed, and his blood boiled with a fury that even terrified himself. It was with difficulty he restrained himself from bursting into the room, and disclosing all. The clock now struck twelve, and the ladies rose, and opening the parlour door, were proceeding up stairs to their respective bed-rooms. Again the shame of being detected in his present suspicious position, smote on his sense of dignity, and he hurried up stairs. As he hastened up the last flight, he heard Mrs. Russel say, "Did you not *see* Walter?" Alice replied carelessly, "No; I was busy in my own room when he came in, and he was gone up stairs to bed before I came down stairs again."

Walter heard no more. He closed his room door; but still, in the conscious shame of a clandestine listener, he took care to make no noise in so doing. With a mind agitated by a thousand conflicting passions, he threw himself on a chair, and gave up his whole soul to the

conflict of emotions that overwhelmed it. He was betrayed, deceived, duped, and miserable. All this was sure and evident to his vehement mind; but how to avenge it! nay, how best to evade the shame, was beyond the comprehension of one whose mind could not dwell for a moment on one subject. His thoughts were a chaos of confused emotions. Surely he had deceived his own senses. Surely the whole must be a dream! no, no; every circumstance was too bright, too real, in his fully alive sensations. The sound of that accursed and unknown voice still rung like a muttered ban in his ear; and the soft silvery tones that blasted his happiness still repeated, as if in laughing mockery, "It goes against my conscience to deceive him." But how was he deceived?—a thought flashed upon him—the paper—the lines written on it! Were they not perhaps written and placed where they might probably meet his eye, for the purpose of deceiving and afterwards ridiculing him? for ridicule could be the only end worth attaining. But to whom? Once, and only once, James Sharpquill occurred to Walter's suspicions. He well knew that James was a half-declared lover of Alice; and *he* (Walter) had more than once joined her in laughing at the awkward inamorato. Was it not possible that James might be permitted to take the same sport

with him? The thought was no sooner formed than scoffed at. Whatever might be the secret of Alice's conduct, he could not for a moment suspect her of a taste so grovelling as that. But who could *he* be? that mysterious voice? It was in vain that Walter ransacked his brain for an object of suspicion. The circle of acquaintances who frequented the house was so very limited, that it was with little difficulty that he summoned every individual to his recollection; and, among all the number, there was not one young man but James Sharpquill; nor one human being whom he could suspect with even a shadow of probability. Who then could it be? Could Alice be so artful, so guilty, as form a connexion with one who blushed to own it in the face of society? or could the voice that still vibrated in his ear be the dream of fancy? A sound like the closing of the area-door startled him. It was a clear moonlight night, and he hurried to the window, and distinctly saw the figure of a man hastening across the street. The first glance showed him it was not James Sharpquill; but who it was, he knew not. A slouched hat and a large cloak completely obscured recognition, and the form was out of sight in a moment.

CHAPTER IV.

On the following morning, when they met at breakfast, Walter looked in vain for some traces of confusion, or any unusual emotion in Alice's face; but no, nothing of the flushed and agitated passions that were pourtrayed in his own countenance, was visible in hers. She was calm, pale; but not paler than usual: silent, but not remarkably so; for she was busy mending many old, and marking many new, pairs of stockings, which Mrs. Russel was anxious to get ready before his departure.

"Mary," said Miss Vickery, addressing herself with a tone of unusual importance to her sister, "Mary, did you hear any noise last night after we went up stairs?"

"No, indeed; when?"

"Oh, it's of no consequence; but, just after we went up stairs, I thought I heard a noise vastly like the slam of our area gate. I may be mistaken, but I strongly suspect I'm right; and it's my opinion it would be as well to make some inquiries about it."

"I think, Rachael, you must be mistaken;

Jane always keeps the key, and locks it every night after dusk; and I think nobody need suspect *her;* at least, I put perfect trust in her."

"And the more foolish are you to do so, sister, that's all I can say; for if Jane should be ever so careful about locking the door in general, it *was* open last night, for my own ears heard it shut *distinctly;* and what's more, I looked out of the window, and plainly saw the figure of a man running across the street."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Russel, in a tone evidently affecting more alarm than she felt, for the purpose of escaping the further arguments of the speaker. "I must really enquire about it. I shall question Jane, and see what she has to say."

Walter had looked hard in Alice's face during the whole of this dialogue, but she remained intent on her work: not even the slightest variation of colour indicating any emotion or interest in what was passing. Under any other circumstances, that she should show no interest, nor join in the conversation, was not wonderful, as Miss Vickery was in the habit of exciting false alarms, therefore nobody paid much attention to her; but, as it was, Walter knew this was no false alarm, and he felt more surprised and perplexed than ever at Alice's conduct.

At this moment the servant entered, and put a note into his hand, which at once changed the current of his ideas. He looked at the address; it was a female hand, but unknown to him. It was coloured paper, highly scented with a rare perfume; and the seal bore the impression of a bird escaping from its cage, with the French motto,

"Qui me néglige, me perd."

Walter hastily opened it, and read the following words:—

"As our meeting of the other evening afforded no opportunity of explanation, I would fain appoint a more favourable time and place for an interview. This evening, at half-past eight o'clock, I shall be walking on the western side of Waterloo Bridge. If you are worthy of the confidence I would repose in you, you will meet me there, where another service, added to that already conferred, will render for ever your slave, a heart already devoted by gratitude to you.

"R. S."

Walter's heart palpitated violently, and his hand even trembled as he read the contents of the billet. For a moment he needed not to doubt from whom it came. The circumstance

to which it alluded, together with the signature, left no doubt on his mind that the writer was Rose Simkin.

"Surely that pretty billet is from the Lady Georgina herself," said Miss Vickery, smiling archly; "for Mr. Deverell blushes so deeply, one would think it was of something more than meets the eye."

Walter tried to laugh, and hastened to thrust the note in his waistcoat pocket.

"You dine at home I hope, Walter?" said Mrs. Russel.

"If I can; but I fear I shall have little time to dine any where. I must spend the day in making a few farewell *calls*, and the afternoon will hardly afford sufficient time for *packing*."

"Packing!—what do you mean, child? You don't intend commencing operations so soon as that? Do you know I have engaged you to a party at Mr. Gardiner's next Monday evening? and Emma says she will take no excuse."

"I fear necessity must plead my excuse," said Walter, sighing; "to-morrow morning, at nine o'clock, I set off for Dover." Mrs. Russel was speechless with astonishment; and Miss Vickery threw up her hands and eyes with an exclamation; Alice did not look up: she did not appear even to pause from her work; but if Walter

had been looking at her, he would have seen, in the sudden and deadly paleness which overspread her face, enough to prove that her heart felt keenly enough to satisfy even his jealousy.

"Ah, very well, Walter," said Mrs. Russel with a sigh; "you seem to be very anxious to leave us, and I can only wish you may be always so much happier than you are at present, as never to regret us."

"That cannot be," exclaimed Walter with much emotion. "Never, never can I be so happy as I have been during the years I have spent at your fireside. My present feelings only tell me that the remembrance of this dear home will be henceforth my sole and dearest pleasure." As he spoke, he took the hand of Mrs. Russel within his, and pressed it affectionately. She struggled to withdraw it, for she strove to conceal her tears, and hurried out of the room.

"How long were you thinking of staying in Paris?" asked Miss Vickery coldly, as our hero leant on the mantelpiece, intently examining one of its ornaments, though in fact for the purpose of concealing his agitation.

"About a year."

"And I presume you will afterwards settle in Devonshire?"

"I am at present quite unresolved about my

future prospects," replied Walter. Where or how I settle, must depend on circumstances, over which I have no control."

"Hum!—I presume you will make a farewell *call* on most of your acquaintances here before you set off?"

"I shall have so little time, madam, that I fear many must take the will for the deed. There are a few whom I must of necessity call on; but as for the rest, Mrs. Russel will be kind enough to make my apologies."

"Hum!—Lord Ellerton, for instance; you must of necessity call on him, doubtless?"

"Lord Ellerton, madam," replied Walter, colouring as he saw the intended insult, "is empowered by my grandfather with absolute authority over my conduct during my stay in London; and I could hardly leave it without at least apprising him of my intentions."

"Oh, by no means—certainly not," said Miss Vickery in a softened tone; "I never proposed your doing so; on the contrary, I said it would be quite necessary to do so; but I was going to mention, at the same time, that I thought there were others to whom you owed a similar civility. I allude to Mrs. Sharpquill. I hardly think it would be polite to go away without bidding her farewell, especially after declining, as you did, to attend her evening party last Christmas; and,

if you will recollect, you have not entered the door since, even to make an apology."

"Since you mention it," replied Walter smiling, "I plead guilty to having behaved very remiss to Mrs. Sharpquill; but I fear it is not in my power to make her amends at present. I must rely on your kindness to plead for me."

"Better ask Alice to exert her influence with Mr. James," replied Miss Vickery. Walter looked round to where Alice was sitting a moment before, but she was no longer there. Miss Vickery now rose and proceeded to busy herself with *laying out*, as she termed it, her work for the day, humming a tune to herself, with no reference to music, but a habit she had of showing her contempt of any one in her presence. Walter proceeded to go out, but not from any annoyance which that contempt caused him, for he was too well accustomed to bear contempt from that quarter, to be in any way affected by it.

Miss Vickery had never liked Walter—in fact, from the first she disliked him, though, to use her own phrase, she "didn't know what it was about him," that excited her disapproval. Anxious to get over the most disagreeable duty first, Walter proceeded straight to the residence of the Earl of Ellerton, where we need not tire our readers, who have already had a specimen of

Lady Georgina's conversation, with a repetition of the thousand idle nothings which passed during the hour which Walter staid to take his farewell. At parting, however, she pressed his hand with much kindness; and with an easy frankness of manner, placed a ring on his finger, at the same time fixing her eyes full on his face as she spoke—"Keep that for my sake: I shall not require any pledge in return, but the promise that *your return* shall be as soon as possible," and she laughed alone at her own wit; and in the same breath that she bade him farewell, requested him to order her carriage as he passed through the hall.

Walter departed with feelings of anything but satisfaction. For the first time, as he passed along the street, he glanced at the ring placed on his finger by her ladyship. It was a brilliant of the first water, of extraordinary size and value. He felt at once indignant at his own folly in thus accepting such a gift from one for whom he had not the slightest regard, and affronted at the patronizing air of the giver. In the first impulse of the moment, he felt inclined to return it; but as he reflected on it, he shrank from so uncourteous and ungallant a proceeding. To her ladyship, the ring was of no intrinsic value, and to reject the gift of friendship would be at once unkind and unmanly. Again, the

broad hints of the Earl, and the familiar favouring manner of the lady herself, recurred to him. Ought he not to undeceive them? Phoo! folly and vanity!—probably grounded on mere self-conceit. His future conduct would clearly show his intentions, if the Earl or his daughter cared to know them.

At leisure, his thoughts now recurred to the mysterious note. All circumstances combined, convinced him it was from Rose Simkin. He had on the preceding day dispatched a letter of adieu, which must have reached them before that he received had been written. Probably the reasons she sought his confidence were too urgent to be delayed, and she had hastened this interview, when apprised of his intended departure. But his heart beat quick with other and deeper feelings, as he again perused the billet—"a heart already devoted to you." Such a declaration from a young and lovely female, and one whom he could not doubt was virtuous, could not fail to excite emotion and alarm in the breast of a man of honour. Although he had not regarded Rose Simkin with indifference, she held no place in his affections worthy of the feelings she declared to him. His heart was wholly and devotedly another's. Virtue, pity, and honour, must command him to reject her devotion. Walter was no moralist—quite the con-

trary: his actions were generally the result of impulse, rarely matured by reason; but he was young, and youth would always fain dream of virtue.

To refuse to obey the proposal of the note, was impossible, at least Walter thought so; but how to act during an interview so trying, under circumstances so critical! Be that as it may, fate alone could decide—fate, stern arbitress! who rules our actions, and in defiance of reason or inclination, bends us to her decrees.

It was a dull, drizzly evening, and the moon shone drowsily through a thick and cloudy atmosphere, while a constant rain fell in that small thick shower which to the pedestrian is more disagreeable than even a heavy storm. Though still a dim twilight, the lamps of the Strand were lighted as Walter took his way towards the place of assignation, to meet the writer of the mysterious note—the young and lovely being who, so briefly known, was so deeply interesting to his feelings. Did he love Rose Simkin?—no, his love was all another's; but surely he would be more or less than man, who could know that one so young and beautiful was devoted to him, and know it with indifference.

Impatience and anxiety had led him to the place of appointment, full half an hour before the time; for, after having paid the toll, and paced

several times with hasty steps to and fro the whole length of the bridge, the many-tongued bells rung the hour of eight.

It would be vain to attempt to give an account of the various sensations which agitated our hero during the *interminable* half-hour. As the time drew nearer, his emotion increased. He looked with an anxious eye and a palpitating heart first towards the one entrance and then the other, fearful lest by any accident he might miss her he sought. Very few persons passed over the bridge, and not one on the side where he walked; but he was afraid to cross over, lest by leaving the place appointed he might mistake his purpose. Indeed he had no temptation; for none of the persons who had passed hitherto, bore the least resemblance to his fair one. The bells rang out the half hour; and the agitation of suspense became almost insupportable. As he judged that in all probability Rose would enter by the north gate, he took his station not far from that entrance; and, after having waited a few minutes, the gate opened, and there entered, not Rose, but a very tall fat woman, wrapped in a cloak. She passed over; and, it is needless to say, our hero did not follow her. The clocks again rang to announce that another quarter had elapsed; and Walter, beginning to lose patience, began also to suspect that there must

be some mistake in the matter. Was it not possible he had flattered his vanity too hastily? He had *heard* of such things as hoaxes; and, in such a situation, it was not wonderful that he should recur to them. But the note? It alluded to circumstances, of which none but himself and her whom he suspected was the writer, knew. But then, it was possible that some one—The creaking jarring sound of the gate here put a stop to all further surmise. Eagerly every thought and look was turned to watch the entrance of the person, whose approach that sound announced. *She* entered—for it was a woman—a slight figure enveloped in a cloak, with a long veil drawn close over a cottage-shaped bonnet. She paused too, and looked anxiously around. Our hero sprang forward, and, before a moment's lapse, his hand was clasping hers, his arm supporting that which leant heavily as if for protection, and the wild pulsation of her heart gave signs, with its almost audible throbs, of that agitation which was denied words. A gentle "Hush!" accompanied by an admonitory raising of her small finger, silenced all interrogatory, until both had crossed the road, and reached the safe *solitary* side, where the lady, raising her long veil and looking up in his face, by the light of the moon and the brighter beams of an adjacent lamp, disclosed

the face, not of Rose Simkin, but of the governess, Mademoiselle de Courcey. Surprise, consternation, and disappointment absolutely paralysed the utterance and senses of our hero; but not so the lady; there was evidently no mistake on her part.

"Alas!" exclaimed she, in a theatrical tone, "I fear my anticipations are too truly fulfilled; you despise me, for having taken the liberty—the intrepidity of addressing you. But, alas! hard fate compelled me to seek a protector; and whither to fly I knew not. I may have acted imprudently; but circumstances will plead my excuse for thus claiming the aid of the only being who has testified an interest in my fate."

"I am sorry, madam," replied Walter, in some confusion, "that I do not comprehend your meaning; but, if you will explain yourself, I shall be willing to serve you by all means in my power,"

"Nobly spoken!" exclaimed the lady, clasping the arm on which she leant. "Then, thank Heaven! I am not deceived; and the interest you have hitherto testified in me was not feigned with a view to beguile an ardent and confiding heart. But, listen to my story, and judge if my conduct is not justified; and judge if any punishment is enough for those dirty, vile, vulgar, despicable, ignorant, wretches, by whom

I have been so shamefully abused. Would you credit it? the envious beggars, that very evening, after you were there, they actually turned me out of doors, without a farthing in my pocket, or a friend whom I could apply to. And I, too, who had done so much for the low-lifed vermin, and condescended to live in their filthy city dunghill, and make gentlewomen of them—the vulgar trulls! But I'll prosecute them; I'll show the world what they are; and Miss Rose and her young gentleman cousin, too! I'll, may be, tell old Simkin more than he guesses at himself. But, no matter! *I* know well enough the cause of it all: the spiteful frights were envious of the attentions you were so inconsiderate as betray towards me. No matter! I trust *we* shall live to make them repent of it."

During this unexpected harangue, Walter remained perfectly breathless with amazement. From the language he could form some idea of the cause of her indignation—probably originating in some quarrel with the Simkins; but by what means *he* had become incorporated in such a dispute, he could neither guess nor conceive. Still less could he accuse his own conscience of ever having, to the best of his recollection, given the family of Simkins any cause for the "spite," to which the lady so eloquently alluded. Yet, with due deference to common

gallantry, it was hardly possible to convince her of her mistake; but, fortunately for Walter, the volubility of his fair companion required little or no assistance or response on his part.

"I trust you don't wonder," said she, after a short pause, having exhausted the whole vocabulary of her passion in invectives against the Simkinses, in which she totally relinquished her usual high-flown style; "I trust these circumstances will plead pardon for my unwarranted claim on your aid and support—Unwarranted, do I say? Ah! ungrateful that I am, do I forget the generous kindness once shown in my behalf, kindness that might well have justified higher presumption than I am now guilty of. But wherefore need I excuse myself to one whose noble exalted mind needs no excuse to justify the claims of a desolate, yet still adoring, heart!"

"On my word, madam," replied Walter, summoning resolution, "you do me high honour —more, I fear, than it is in my power to repay; but you would really oblige me by stating by what means it is in my power to serve you, and I shall do it."

"Live and die with me! and permit me to do the same for you," replied the lady.

This was a somewhat startling proposal, and it was not to be wondered at though our hero felt at a loss how to reply to it.

"I protest, madam," replied he, after a pause, during which the lady continued to lean on his arm, having drawn her veil modestly over her face; "I protest you do me too much honour. I cannot repay such kindness; and therefore I am unworthy to receive it. I beseech you, be less disinterested; perhaps, it is in my power to assist you, in so far as your worldly means may at this unfortunate period require. What I can, I shall gladly do; but, I entreat you, be more explicit, and grant me the pleasure of serving you."

"Base, ignoble man!" exclaimed the lady, pushing him from her with much violence; "and is it thus you would repay a heart who has sacrificed its whole happiness at your feet? Wretch! dare you presume to proffer your vile lucre in exchange for rifled affections and blighted hopes? And is it for this—oh, heavens!—that I have sacrificed fame, honour, and pride, wretch that I am, to become the dupe of an unfeeling monster?" And, with these words, suddenly sitting down on the curb-stone of the pavement, she covered her face with her hands, and burst into an hysterical fit of weeping.

Totally at a loss how to act, Walter stood, lost in perplexity and agitation, scarcely exceeded by that of his companion. Had he been ten years older, the whole affair would probably have

appeared in a far different light; but as it was, he felt no ways inclined to regard it as merely ludicrous. A woman, under almost any circumstances, always commanded his attention, if not his interest; and, under the present circumstances, he felt himself seriously involved. Perhaps, had time been granted him, he might have doubted the sincerity of the lady's emotion; but, taken thus by surprise, he was unable to form any connected idea, or think how to act.

At this moment the sound of many voices, followed by a loud general laugh, interrupted the hitherto comparative stillness; and the loud noise, caused by a rough application to the gate, was followed by the appearance of a party of gentlemen, who, with as much uproar and haste as the narrow entrance would permit, forced their way through, and proceeded to cross the bridge, with all the confusion and riot that high spirits, and evident inebriety, could promote.

"Hollo! who goes there?" shouted the foremost, perceiving our hero and his companion. "A knight and lady, by Jove!—we must hold parley with them."

"Come on; what are they to you?" cried his more eager, and apparently less intoxicated companions. "We have no time to hold parley with any one."

"Behold, then! I encounter them alone,"

cried the first; and heedless of the rest, who pursued their way over towards the southern entrance, he staggered across the street to where Walter and his fair companion stood; the latter having started up, forgetting her sorrow in her alarm, and clung with convulsive grasp to the arm of our hero, to whose eyes the form of the approaching reveller presented, what his ears had previously detected, no other than Lord Ellerton.

Fortunately for our hero, his lordship's chief attention was directed towards the lady; and also that his extreme inebriation prevented any probability of recognition.

"Fair lady!" exclaimed the earl, in a tone of mock respect, "behold a devoted champion advance to tender life and honour in your cause. Nay, don't be frightened, most beautiful. Wherefore cling for protection to that recreant slave, who jealous of your all-attractive charms—'pon honour a pretty veil though—but, by Jove, I will see what sort of a face is under it." With these words he attempted to seize on Mademoiselle, who shrieked loudly. Indignant at the idea of an offered insult, to any female, Walter was totally thrown off his guard; and forgetting his desired concealment, he said, in a loud and commanding tone,—

" For-shame, Lord Ellerton ! stand off, you shall not disgrace yourself."

" Gads my life," exclaimed the earl, starting back in amazement, " Walter Deverell, as I live!" and grasping him by the shoulder, in the boisterous familiarity of drunkenness, he vociferated, " Bravo !—by my soul, you are a fine fellow—but the third one is sure to thrive ; so come on, you won't refuse us a sight of her face. By Jove, if she's but one half as pretty as the other two, you are a lucky dog. So just excuse us, fair lady, do grant one look of your face, and let's see what sort you are."

" Not so fast, my lord," said the lady, suddenly grasping him by the arm. " We are old acquaintances, and perhaps know more of each other than *you* may find just convenient. We are met in good time too, for perhaps you would like to hear some news of your quondam friend, Madame Varty ? and, I'll answer for it, that Monsieur, her husband, will make no objections to recognise his wife's former lover, the Hon. Horace Melton, as no less a personage than a peer of the realm. Who knows but this discovery may tend to double damages."

" Good Heavens ! Miss Smith,—can it be you ?" exclaimed the earl, whom this unexpected recognition had evidently perfectly sobered. " I

declare I ask pardon, a thousand times. But wherefore do old friends meet in so unfriendly a manner. I—I protest, you mistake me wholly. It is all a misunderstanding."

"Nay, nay, not in the least," replied the newly-discovered Miss Smith, whose former knowledge of the earl seemed connected with circumstances of which his lordship dreaded the disclosure. "No mistake, I assure you; M. Varty has been anxious to learn who the *ci-devant* Horatio M. could be; and, I have no doubt, he will be rejoiced at my discovery."

"Come, come, Miss Smith," interrupted the earl, in no small confusion; "all that is an old story. Let's talk about yourself; and tell me what has become of you; as to all that, we can speak of it afterwards. Upon my life, I declare I should hardly have known you, though it is scarcely a year since we parted, you are so much improved. Ten years younger, as I live: and Madame Varty, poor soul, I trust she is well,—upon my honour it is all a falsehood about that affair. I protest I never thought of her. You, and you only, were the magnet of attraction; but what *has* become of you? I have lost sight of you for an age: where do you live? I declare I must pay you a visit."

"As to that matter, not far off," replied the lady, tossing her head coquettishly. "My

apartments, for the present, are in Beaufort's-buildings, — the very same where Madame Varty ——"

"A fig for Madame Varty! I tell you I thought only of you. So come, let us go together," said the earl, drawing her not unwilling arm in his; and the noble earl, with his fair companion, walked off together, leaving our hero unnoticed and alone, standing as if rooted to the spot; feeling, and looking, more like a fool, than anything else in the world.

It was not till some minutes after the departure of his companions; who passed through the toll-bar, and quitted the bridge, that Walter recovered his scattered senses, sufficiently to be aware of his situation; the extreme absurdity of which made him burst out laughing, in spite of the shame, and sense of humiliation, which overwhelmed him. There was no means of redress, even had he felt inclined to have sought it; indeed, as it was, he congratulated himself in the termination of the whole affair, which, a short time before, he had been foolish enough to regard in a more serious light. There was nothing now to be done, but to go quietly home—rather a homely termination to such a romantic commencement. But necessity has no law; and our hero proceeded on his way to Caroline-street, with his own reflections, which were somewhat

humbling, to amuse him on his way. At all events, his vanity had received a lesson which he secretly determined to profit by; and congratulating himself that few had witnessed his laughable position, he resolved in future not to be so hasty in flattering himself of the favours of the fair sex.

At any other time our hero might have felt his humiliation more strongly; but, at present, his mind was occupied in other, and more painful, thoughts. He was on the eve of parting from the dearest—the only being he loved, and with feelings rendered more bitter by doubts and jealousy.

"She does not love me! she despises me!" he mentally exclaimed, as he approached the house: "but no wonder," he added; "fool that I am, my own conduct makes me despise myself."

On approaching the door, to his surprise, he found it open; a circumstance which was explained, when he observed the servant talking to some gossip on the adjoining door-step. As she did not perceive his approach, he felt in no way inclined to interrupt their conversation, but entered, unperceived, leaving the door as he found it. He proceeded to the parlour, the door of it was a-jar; he entered, it was vacant; but a light which shone through the half-open door of Alice's

room, showed that some one was there. He hesitated, and was on the point of retiring, when a low stifled sob reached his ear. His heart beat quick, and he trembled with emotion, as he instinctively advanced towards the door from whence it proceeded. It was half open, and, on advancing, he beheld Alice kneeling on the floor, her elbows resting on a chair, and her face covered with her hands, while the convulsive sobs, which agitated her frame, gave visible signs of the feelings she evidently strove to stifle.

Walter's whole frame thrilled with emotion. He felt impelled to clasp her in his arms; when a sudden movement of her position deterred him. She raised her head, and pressed something she held in her hand, passionately to her lips. Walter advanced another step. He beheld his own hand-writing, the lines he had traced the preceding night, kissed with impassioned fervour, and bathed with her precious tears. What lover's heart could resist this! in a moment, the light form of Alice was clasped to his heart, and her wild exclamation of surprise, was lost in the burst of feeling which followed, as she wept on the bosom of her happy, and now declared, lover.

"Alice, dear Alice, can you love me?"

"Walter, can I ever repay *your* love?—nay, surely, this cannot be;—this is too much happiness, too much for one who merits it so little."

"Oh, Alice!—the first, the dearest, the only love of my heart,—say rather that no devotion of mine can ever repay the bliss of this moment—to feel, to hope, that the heart which lives but for thee, may one day be permitted to offer itself: all, all—life, honour, hand and heart, to thee. Oh! say it but once! and let my toils, my efforts, be cheered by the hope, that one day they may render me worthy of thy love."

"Oh, Walter! wherefore ask me to repeat what I have already too boldly declared? alas! could words—but you know all—all that my weak foolish heart deemed it would break before it could avow. Oh, ask me no farther to—— but, stay!" and, with hurried hand, she snatched the album which lay open on the table, and taking out the paper, on which her own hand had traced the lines addressed to himself, she put it into his hand.

"Keep that," she said; "and let my own hand-writing stand to prove my truth. If I prove false, that places me in your power; that will prove my weakness and your triumph."

What might have been Walter's reply, it is impossible to say; for, at that moment, the sound of Miss Vickery's voice, in the passage, put to flight all other ideas, save the best possible means of escape.

"Quick, quick," exclaimed Alice, with agitated

haste, pointing to the door; "it is mamma and my aunt. I would not for the world——"

The word was no sooner given than obeyed. With the speed of light Walter fled, and availing himself of the back-parlour door, he passed unobserved by Miss Vickery; who, having entered with Mrs. Russel (both having returned from a visit), luckily for our hero, was engaged in scolding the servant for having left the street-door open, therefore he ascended the stairs unperceived.

Where is the lover who, at a moment like this, could doubt the truth of the heart that had confided all to him!

As in the rapture of newly-awakened hope, Walter knelt, in his solitary chamber; he felt that the world contained but one being for him. But, alas! it would seem as though fate only placed happiness in our view, to mock us by snatching it from us.

One withering thought alone crossed his momentary dream of bliss; but that thought was sufficient to destroy it. He must part from her he loved; leave all that made life sweet, to toil and hope in a foreign land for the uncertain visions of a distant future. But wherefore fly! happiness was in his power;—wherefore not grasp it, heedless of worldly advantages, as the more grovelling ambition of venal interests? Alas!

such is the dream of the enthusiast; but Walter had already seen, that happiness cannot exist in this world, independent of its realities.

It was, indeed, a bitter struggle; but he overcame it, and resolved to quit the dangerous spot, where every circumstance united to tempt him to sacrifice himself, and her, who was dearer to him than self.

CHAPTER V.

Let us return, for a time, to Alice. Alas! her feelings, at this trying moment, require more sympathy than those of her lover, whose firmer mind was better calculated to sustain the contention of various impressions.

Solitude, and the silent hour of night, left poor Alice at freedom to indulge in the grief, which she had concealed from observation, during the course of the long and weary day.

She wept long and bitterly; but it is not always the deepest sorrow that can find vent in tears; and hers did not flow wholly for sorrow. Her grief was mingled with a new and unhoped for joy. The consciousness of being loved, softens the keenest pang, even at the moment of parting. Yea, even the eternal farewell is robbed of half its bitterness, when uttered in accents that breathe love to the last sigh.

Till now, Alice had felt that the parting hour must be the last of her earthly happiness; but now fond hope shone forth to brighten the days of separation, and to promise a bright halo on existence to come.

Yet Alice wept; and when she could weep no longer, she strove to collect her scattered senses to calm reflection; but that reflection dwelt on one subject only, and the mirror of her soul could present no image but that which was for ever first and present, the image of Walter.

Surely, she ought to be happy,—her fondest hopes were fulfilled, her dearest prayer was granted. But, alas! the thought of the parting hour smote on her heart, with anguish unutterable.

"To-morrow, and we must part," she repeated to herself a thousand times, vainly hoping that in accustoming herself to the thought, her feelings might become blunted. Vain hope! the more she reflected, the more painful the idea of the dreaded moment became.

Poor Alice was tired and worn out. All the day, from six o'clock in the morning, she had been busily engaged in getting ready the things necessary for Walter's journey; and, perhaps, there is no task so hard to perform as that which tends to hasten an event which one would fain avoid. To assist a dear friend to pack up for a long journey, from which it is uncertain when (if ever) he will return, is about as joyless an occupation as can be assigned to any human being. Impelled to exertion by the assurance that our efforts alone can promote the comforts

of him who is hastening from us, while every effort is damped by the conviction that we are speeding on that event which is to render all exertion needless, and to place the dear being who, perhaps, occupies every thought, far, far beyond the reach of our attentions. Alice had felt that truth in its full force. Her fingers were sore with working, and her eyes with weeping; but her heart was still sorer with the idea, that the time was now fast approaching, when she could no longer exert herself for him, for whose sake alone she felt life worth prizing.

"To-morrow morning, at nine o'clock," she repeated, "and he will be gone, gone, yes, but he says he will return; alas! even so. How long and dreary a time must elapse before that can be!—to-morrow morning he must say farewell! —to-morrow and I shall no longer see him—no longer hear his voice, or listen for the sound of his footsteps! to-morrow he will be far away; but no, no, *he* can never leave me, for his image must dwell for ever on my heart. There, for ever, he will be present to me, as dear, as true, as now, till that happy hour, in the hope of which existence can alone be cherished till we meet."

So Alice fondly hoped, but the hour of parting was not yet come. During the whole of that night, she did not retire to rest; sleep for many a long night had been banished from her pillow.

With the feelings ascribed to those who await the hour of their doom, Alice counted the very moments as they passed, regretting each as it led nearer to that hour which was to rob her of her happiness. Morning broke, and, for the first time, she sorrowed at the dawning light; yet, as she looked from her window, she watched the first beams of the rising sun, with a melancholy pleasure. "It is the last time," said she to herself, "that it will rise on the roof which shelters *us* together. What! no, not the *last* time," and her heart smote her with a melancholy foreboding for having suffered such a thought, even for a moment.

The whole family were astir at an early hour; and, before eight o'clock, an ample breakfast (of which none could partake) was ready in the parlour. Walter had not yet made his appearance; nor was it until twice summoned, that he joined the circle. There was more design than necessity in this; for he was neither engaged nor asleep; but he knew well that no opportunity would possibly be afforded of seeing Alice alone, and he wished rather to avoid the pain which it must be to both, to undergo the constrained emotions of this their last interview.

Mrs. Russel had been up since day-break, anxious and eager concerning all necessary comforts, such as Walter ungratefully assured her

were unnecessary; and Miss Vickery had also been up, because she was determined to be of as much importance as any one else. Under the surveillance of her quick jealous eye, Walter knew well there was no hope, for even the whisper of love. Never, since the little circle now assembled had first sat down together, had they partaken of such a silent meal. Partaken, if such a word can be used, to those tasteless heart-sick efforts with which each urges the other to eat; forgetting to set the example, or striving to do so, that others may accompany him.

Alice spoke little, but she felt none of that overwhelming agitation which had hitherto betrayed itself in ill-concealed emotion. She felt a heavy, sickening, aching, pain at her heart, which dulled every sensation. Walter strove to appear in good spirits, talked of the probable shortness of his absence, and the chances of his revisiting them, even before the term assigned for his return; and, as he now declared, his certain final settlement in London. The kind-hearted Mrs. Russel listened with pleasure, and even strove to maintain a conversation on the subject; but a faltering of the voice, an unwonted thickness of utterance, and sometimes an unbidden tear, which she hastily wiped away, betrayed how little her feelings were fitted for the exertion. Even Miss Vickery was touched

by the pervading melancholy; for although she never liked Walter, she did not like the idea of parting with him.

"Alice," said Walter, placing a small parcel of books tied up and directed, which he had brought into the room when he came down stairs, "Alice, will you give these to Emma Gardiner? tell her they are from me; they consist of a few of those which we read with her, and which she preferred. I think it will give her pleasure to have them."

"I will," replied Alice, but her heart smote her with a strange pang, a feeling new and painful; but she hurried it from her thoughts. The hour now drew near—the time had been prolonged to the last moment, but it could not be farther stayed. A hackney-coach was sent for, in which all the luggage having been duly stowed, nothing remained but that hardest task, to say "Farewell." There is hardly one of our readers, we will venture to say, who has not parted from some dear friend, and must be aware, that, though very painful, it is seldom very romantic—the farewell taking of social life. Romance exists in the pages of romance-writers, but rarely in the routine of domestic joys, or affliction, and the brief hurried adieus, the last farewells, waved during the transit from the threshold to the hackney-coach, would exhibit

but a poor figure to the expectations of a high-flown lover of romance, if detailed in these pages. The farewell was briefly uttered, the last blessing given in homely phrase, but not less deeply felt.

"Farewell, Alice, God bless you," exclaimed Walter, in a voice firm, but hoarse with emotion, as he grasped her cold chill hand in his, the last, the dearest pressure. Alice could not say farewell—her voice was choked, and she struggled with a sense of almost suffocation. One moment she felt his arm clasping her; she felt the pressure of his burning lips, wildly pressed to the hand he held; one moment more, and he was gone. Her senses, her feelings, her frame even, seemed paralysed; but notwithstanding her utter powerlessness of every faculty, she was keenly alive to the reality of her deprivation. She stood fixed to the spot, but she caught his last look, the last wave of his hand, as he leant from the coach-window. She stood till the coach drove out of sight, and till even the last echo of its wheels no longer sounded on her ear. Slowly she quitted the threshold; she entered the vacant parlour, she hurried to her own little apartment, and, locking the door, sunk on her knees, where, after some moments of almost insensibility, a flood of tears recalled her to a sense of her woe.

Oh! long, long, and bitterly did Alice weep;

but tears, which before had relieved, now seemed only to strain her heart-strings to that keen pitch of agony, which rendered every sob almost insufferable. It would be vain to attempt to pourtray her sensation during the remainder of that dreary day. Those who have never been in a similar situation, can form no idea of them; and those who have, must know, that their feelings baffle all description. Night came, and it was not until that wretched night was over, and the following morning had dawned on her grief, that she felt, fully and calmly, the utter but helpless loneliness of her heart. Alas! we mistake greatly, when we regard the moment of parting as the bitterest pang of separation; ah! no, in the long hours, the days of solitude that follow, alone can be felt the true widowhood of soul. It is not the mere word, farewell, that wrings the fond heart, and blights the cherished hope. It is when that fond heart is left alone, when that hope is deferred in vain longings for the delayed return, that the heart sinks in sorrow, and the hope fades to despair.

The moment when the last farewell still echoed in Walter's voice on her ear, was indeed one of bitter feeling; she felt truly alone, and wretched when he was gone; and when, with a bursting heart, she had wept in the solitude of her chamber, she had felt grief—grief, in its keen

bitterness; but, alas! not in its keenest, deepest reality of loneliness. The first pang of separation was trivial, to the long weary hours of heart-chilling, corroding anguish which followed; anguish, renewed by every familiar object, and awakened by every thought. His place at the table was vacant, and her eye never turned to the spot which he was wont to occupy, without a conviction of desolation and regret. The sound of that dear voice no longer met her ear. That bounding and light footstep no longer announced the approach of him, whose presence never failed to bring gladness to her soul. Often, when alone, with the ever-fanciful mood of grief, she would strive to cheat herself into a momentary belief that he was still there. Sometimes she would even repeat his name aloud as though he were present; but, alas! the unanswered tones of her own voice never failed to awaken her to a sense of the sad reality, and tell her—

"It was no dream, and she was desolate."

Had he never declared his love, she often thought she might have felt this separation less bitterly. Ah! no, no, that was but the thought of a moment, for the dear, dear hope which cheered her sorrow, told her it was that alone consoled her.

Yet Walter was now far from her, might he not forget his vows, scarcely plighted? Ah,

no! a heart that loves must be seared by disappointments, before at first it could doubt the sincerity of the beloved.

Some days elapsed before Alice felt capable of reflection on any one point, but that which was for ever present; and, when she was able, the first wish she felt was to fulfil, as far as she could recollect, every advice, however trifling, that she remembered Walter had suggested. With an aching heart, she *resolved* to apply herself to those studies he had most recommended; but at present she felt incapable of application. After that, there was only one request he had made, and that she hastened to fulfil; but she hastened with a heavy heart; and, when she first remembered it, she felt a pang, a feeling of dissatisfaction, of which she would have blushed to own the cause, if indeed she knew it.

Why should she feel pain at Walter's having wished to give a token of his remembrance to their hitherto dear and mutual friend? Would she not have felt equally pained, had Walter disliked Emma Gardiner? Emma was her childhood's dearest playfellow, the only companion she felt confidence in as a friend. Nay, more; she was always her adviser, on every point that Alice's less shrewd imagination and

weaker mind sought the counsels of her never-doubted judgment.

Emma Gardiner was the only daughter of a father, whose sole hope and love rested on her. Her mother died while she was but a child; and since then she had been educated by her surviving parent, in whose cares were united the affection of a father with the strong sense and firm principles of a man. Emma possessed no small degree of natural talent. She had taken little or no pains to apply it to the more graceful accomplishments. She read only such books as were recommended by her father, who was but little versed in polite literature; but what she read she understood clearly.

That she should be happy—as happy as it is possible for human life to be—that she should be sensible of all the duties of a woman's social employment, was all that Mr. Gardiner required of his daughter. What else she chose to amuse herself with, was left solely to her own choice.

Mr. Gardiner was a solicitor, or, what is now deemed a term of reproach, an attorney. His chambers were in Lincoln's Inn, and his dwelling-house in Southampton Buildings, Holborn. Concerning him no more need now be said, as we leave it to the course of circumstances to introduce him to our readers; and then they

can judge best for themselves. With his daughter only is our present business.

It was of course a fine morning when Alice set off to visit her friend; for, as Southampton Buildings is some distance from Bedford Square, it may be supposed she chose a fine day for her walk. She went alone. Emma was the only friend she visited alone; but she carried with her the parcel of books, which, being comprised of a few small volumes (chiefly poetry), was no great encumbrance.

Emma was seated in the drawing-room, where Alice was ushered in; and, as she embraced her, Alice remarked that she was paler than usual.

"Nonsense, child!" replied Emma, smiling at her kind interrogatory concerning her health; "I am well—always well; but you know I have been keeping late hours, these some days past; and that never agrees with me. But yourself —how are you? *I*, by rights, should have come to see *you*. I heard of poor Walter's departure. Ah! I dare say, you miss him sadly; but—" Here Emma paused, her voice faltered, but it was only for a moment; and she laughed as she added, "I dare say, he will have a gay time at Paris. I should not wonder, though he came back too fine a gentleman to acknowledge us old friends; even *you*, eh? Alice, what do

you say to that? Papa was saying, last night, that Paris would be sure to make a coxcomb of him; and I do believe it; for, in my opinion, there is too much vanity about him already."

Alice tried to laugh as, overcoming her own weakness by the cheering gaiety of her friend, she placed the parcel, which she had still held, in her friend's hand.

"There," said she, "is a present I was commissioned to deliver to you from Walter, to which he bade me add his kind remembrance."

Emma grew deadly pale; her hand trembled as she hastily untied the string. In the title-page of the first volume she opened was her own name, in Walter's hand-writing. She gazed on it for a moment. The colour, which had before fled, now rushed to her cheeks and temples; and, throwing her arms on her friend's neck, she burst into tears.

"Good heavens! Emma, what ails you?" exclaimed Alice, not a little alarmed; for emotions like these were rare to Emma.

"Forgive me; I am a weak and foolish girl," said Emma, starting up, and hastily wiping away the tears which still flowed. "It is folly, let us forget it. Ah, these are the favourite books we used to read with *him*," resumed she, taking up volume after volume, and glancing at the title-pages. On each the same hand had written,

'To Emma Gardiner.' "Here is the copy of Moore's Irish Melodies, and here," continued she, turning over the pages, "his hand has marked all those which I used most to admire. Oh, Alice! how shall I ever repay you for the pleasure you have given me by bringing this."

Alice felt a chilling sensation of sickness oppressing her heart. She longed to hurry from the presence of her friend, whose every word smote on her heart with an unutterable pang. Yet, hating herself for these feelings, she endeavoured to appear interested in the books; though, at every trace of Walter's pencil, she felt sick at heart. Emma gazed on her face with an earnestness of scrutiny, which seemed to read her soul; but a young and inexperienced mind rarely reads aright.

"Alice," said she, taking her hand—the sudden touch made Alice start—"to you I have always confided every feeling of my mind—Every one, did I say? No, there is one secret, that I have mentioned to no human being; but now I would fain seek your sympathy by disclosing that."

Alice trembled. For the first time in her life she wished to avoid the confidence of her friend.

"I know you will think me a foolish girl," pursued Emma; "but, at least, *you* will be the most lenient of all others to my folly. I know

not how it is, but candour is surely my only virtue; for it seems to sway my every action. I am miserable, even to be happy in secret; but first, will you be candid, Alice? Tell me truly if, in any one word, look, or action of mine, you ever could have inferred aught beyond mere friendship in my feelings towards Walter Deverell?"

This was a startling question; but Alice never had; and she faintly replied, "Never."

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed Emma, with emotion. "There, at least, I have conquered my nature, so far; and I have never debased a woman's proudest feelings—a woman's sole dignity. Alice, he is gone; he is parted from my sight; the distant wave cannot bear my confession to his ear; and you—you are too true, too faithful, to betray the weakness of your friend. Alice, I loved him: I love him still; dearer than my own existence; dearer than the father that has loved me, or the memory of the mother who bore me. Alice, mine is no girlish dream. I loved him before I knew the nature of that passion. I shall love him, when all save its memory has faded from my expiring senses. Heaven and my own burning heart, alone knows how long I have wept, prayed, and adored him. Oh, how I have envied you, my saintly, calm, and beautiful Alice! You were the darling,

the idol of his boyish sports; and of later years, he has often declared he loved you as a sister. There is but a few months between your age and mine; but you were his little darling, while I —but oh, Alice! I sometimes have ventured to hope that he regarded *me* with those feelings which I felt for him: may not my hopes be just?" Here Emma's voice became inarticulate with emotion; she grasped Alice's hand, and pressed it to her burning forehead, its cold chill pressure relieved her, but she never deemed what it was that made it so chill and cold.

Had Emma pronounced the sentence of final doom on Alice, her words could not have produced a more fearful sensation than that which this unexpected declaration excited. Emma was dear to her; she loved her as a sister; she had looked up to her as a superior being, and she now trembled before her as the arbitress of her fate.

The candid, generous, too candid Emma, ever governed by the present emotion, was too much occupied by her own feelings to observe the change in her friend; and the open sincerity of her own disposition rendered it impossible for her to suspect any human being of concealing the sentiments of the mind. Alice too well knew her friend's disposition; and had Emma been less kind, less disinterested and generous,

the trial would have been less bitter. Alice knew that one word would suffice to banish for ever the name of Walter from Emma's lips; but could it banish his image from her heart? Oh, no; Alice knew too well from her own feelings, that such love could never change; and that the heart that cherished it might break, but never be cured. She gazed on Emma, on her glowing cheek, and impassioned gestures, as, with clasped hands, she exclaimed, "Heaven alone knows how long I have loved him!" She gazed, and felt that her doom of misery was sealed. And Walter—could it be that *he* was false? He who had so lately vowed eternal faith to her; could he have basely sought to win the affections of Emma? Oh, fearful thought—a mist seemed to cloud her senses, and darkness obscured her very eyesight.

"Alice," said Emma, again grasping her hand, "I need not ask you to speak of this to no human being; I know you will never betray me. But, do you know, I could have died before I had trusted even you, until he was gone; but now I feel I could almost have avowed it at *his* feet. But, oh, Alice! the fearful thought which has always chilled me in his presence,—if he should not love me;—and yet I cannot believe that he does not—it may be a vain hope; but these books—the marks of his

own hand at my favourite pieces. Wherefore, if he did not love me, would he think thus of me at parting? or why should he remember what I loved best? Oh, Alice! I do not bid you flatter me; but you will not deceive me—oh, tell me, did he think—did he speak of me? Did I hold any place in that heart? Say, say at least that you do not think I am wholly indifferent to him!"

Had Emma not covered her face with her hands, as she uttered that last sentence, she must have observed the now almost death-like hue of Alice's cheek, and the gasping efforts with which she endeavoured to reply. But Emma was too impetuous; her own feelings were too powerful to admit of her noticing those of others.

"Well, well; I do not ask you," she exclaimed; "all you could say, in truth, might but tend to damp my present feelings. Nothing you *could* tell me, can be half so sweet as my own dream; and I would not for worlds that you should tell me aught to dispel it. Surely, love and hope are one, else I could not have hoped so long. Oh, Alice! often I have prayed for one word—one action of his, that could tend to give a semblance of reality to my day dream. Word, look, or action of his, never spoke of aught to do so; yet I still dreamt on; and now,

though this hope, this first dear proof, were again snatched from me—oh, though his own lips declared he could not love me,—still, still, I believe I should dream and hope, till death ended that dream with existence."

"Would that mine could end at this moment," thought Alice, as she leant her aching head on her hand.

"Alice, my own dear girl," said Emma, fondly placing her arm round her neck, "you look pale and weary; and I am unfeeling and selfish to think only of myself. I dare say you have much need of sympathy: ah! you must feel his loss more deeply than I can; wherever he goes I am sure he will never forget his little Alice, his own dear sister, as he used to call you; but, come, come, you must not think of going; papa was saying you never came to see us now—you must spend the day with me, and he and I will walk home with you, and make your excuses there."

Never before had Alice persisted in refusing the invitation of her friend; but it was in vain that the warm-hearted Emma urged every entreaty to detain her. One plea alone Alice knew would gain her release, and that she could plead with justice—the excuse of indisposition. The excuse of a violent head-ache, which she really had, at length obtained her permission to

return home; and never did criminal hasten with more pleasure from the walls of a prison, than she from the hospitable roof and kind solicitations of her friend.

On reaching the door of her own house, she met Mr. Sharpquill senior, who had just quitted it; he bowed with a hasty salutation and walked away. Alice was a little surprised to meet him there at that hour, it being just two o'clock, Mr. S.'s usual dinner hour; but on entering the parlour she was still more unpleasantly surprised to find her mother alone and in tears, which neither her own efforts nor the affectionate solicitudes of Alice could soothe for a considerable time.

"Do not ask me, my love," said she at length, to Alice's repeated question as to the cause of her tears. "It is useless to pain your young heart with evils which you cannot understand, and do not deserve to feel."

But Alice was too anxious to be permitted to sympathise in her mother's grief, and Mrs. Russel was too much accustomed to confide every feeling to her adopted daughter, to suffer the secret to remain long undiscovered.

"You have often heard me mention," said Mrs. Russel, wiping away her tears and speaking more calmly,—"You have often heard me mention, that on my first taking up this house, I borrowed a sum of money from Mr. Sharp-

quill. Well, that I had hoped to be able to repay before very long, but unfortunately it has never been in my power to do so; and more than fifteen years have elapsed since it was due. Mr. Sharpquill has been most kind and gentlemanly; but you know I cannot expect him to want his money for ever. He begins to grow impatient, which is not to be wondered at, and I have not the means to pay him."

"But, dear mamma, do not let that grieve you so much; surely he will wait a little longer since he has waited so long, and perhaps we can find some means of getting the money. I fancy it is not such a mighty sum?"

"It is five hundred pounds, Alice," replied Mrs. Russel. Alice clasped her hands in despair. Five hundred pounds!—that was a sum which her imagination never could have comprehended; and the very idea of it blasted all hope. She well knew that the whole property her mother possessed in the world was not worth that amount, and she saw no earthly means of amassing it.

"Oh, Alice!" exclaimed Mrs. Russel, perceiving the change in her countenance, and snatching her to her arms,—"Oh, my dear, wherefore am I so foolish—so wicked as to grieve you by my vexations?—you too, who are my only comfort! Do not think of it, my love; go

and be happy. I assure you it is only my foolish whims. I shall manage it all well enough, I have no doubt. Mr. Sharpquill won't refuse to wait: he is very friendly; and who knows what may turn out? I would not for worlds that you should fret about it. Go, like a good girl, and put off your bonnet; and come to me again after you have done it, and we shall sit down to work together."

Alice went; but as she proceeded up stairs to take off her walking dress, a thought suddenly struck her. She recollected the jewels which Mrs. Russel had often mentioned as belonging to her mysterious parent. She had heard of their great value, but for the first time in her life she adverted to them as of value to her. A sensation of delight throbbed in her heart. Would not they do more than pay the debt to Mr. Sharpquill? Mrs. Russel had often told her that the diamond necklace alone was valued at nearly a thousand guineas. Then, indeed, it would not only pay all that was demanded, but procure an additional sum of money, which Alice well knew would be very acceptable to her mother. Unable for a moment to delay the disclosure of her own joy, she returned down stairs, and hurried to Mrs. Russel, whom she found still in the parlour; and throwing her arms round her neck, she eagerly recounted the plan

she had so fortunately formed. When she had concluded, to her surprise and vexation, Mrs. Russel burst into tears.

"Oh, my child!" exclaimed she as soon as she was capable of articulation,—"wherefore do you render me thus truly unhappy? Oh, Alice, do you think me so vile—so unprincipled, as to rob you of the only rights that are left you—the last sole claim that reminds you or links you to your unfortunate mother? No, no, my dear, my affectionate child! I have cherished and loved you too well, and you have too well rewarded my cares, to permit me for a moment to harbour such a thought!"

"And would you," said Alice, taking her hand,—"Would you rob me of the sole pleasure I wish for—that of showing my affection and gratitude for your cares? But for you, what might I have been? My mother!—what is she to me but an empty name—unknown even to memory? You—you have been all to me!—to you alone, I owe a daughter's affection; but I need not reason," continued Alice, speaking in a tone of firmness and resolution so unusual to her, that Mrs. Russel was at once surprised and awed,—"I need not reason, for I can act; and I will. Since you renounce all tie on my affections, you will not control my actions. I will go myself to Mr. Sharpquill, and, if he will not dispose of the

trinkets at my desire, he will not refuse to accept of *my* bond, empowering him to do so when I shall become of age."

In one so uniformly mild and submissive, such a sudden declaration of self-will could not fail to take the most guarded mind by surprise; and Mrs. Russel remained, as it were, stupified with astonishment, until she saw Alice actually turn away to quit the room, dressed as she was, to proceed to her purpose.

"Stay!" cried she; "forgive me, my love: I will not oppose your kind generosity; but delay only for a time, and let us consider how best to act."

"I will delay only on one condition, my dear mother," said Alice, still standing with her fingers on the handle of the door—"that is, if you will promise to accompany me to-morrow morning to Mr. Sharpquill's office, and let this be completely settled."

"I do promise," replied Mrs. Russel. Had she refused, it would have been useless; for Alice, though usually so mild and tractable, when once resolved and roused to decision, possessed a firmness of mind and purpose rarely to be met with in those who are contentious or resolute about matters of minor importance.

The morrow was therefore appointed to make the necessary arrangements, and never in the

whole course of her life did Alice feel so truly happy and pleased with herself.

The remainder of the day was of that nature which every one looks back to with pleasure in the calendar of existence—a day of comfort—that concentrated warm-hearted feeling, which (though less delicious at the time than more elevated enjoyment) is always remembered with more pleasure—pleasure rarely mingled with regret.

Alice and her mother sat together in their comfortable parlour, and, undisturbed by fears for the future, talked over all the little plans which excited a mutual interest in both their hearts.

To enhance their comfort, Miss Vickery happened to be from home spending the day at Mrs. Sharpquill's, of whom she had become a frequent visitor, a great friendship having always subsisted between them. Unfortunately for Alice and her mother, she returned early, and, somewhat to their surprise, accompanied by Mrs. Sharpquill herself.

"You see, Mrs. Russel," said that latter lady, as she seated herself with much importance, and took off her bonnet without being asked to do so,—"You see, I make no ceremony with you; your sister was kind enough to wish for my company, so you see I 've come *sans ceremony*, as my James calls it, and mean to take a cup of tea with you."

"You do me much honour," said Mrs. Russel, smiling; but it really went against her conscience to express any *pleasure*, as her feelings were so absolutely the contrary. Mrs. Russel was a good-natured woman, perhaps too easy-tempered; but she was affectionate, and all affectionate people have their dislikes proportioned to their likings, and she always disliked Mrs. Sharpquill.

"Here, Alice, child," said Mrs. S., "I'll thank you to put my bonnet aside on the sofa there. Take care of it. Don't put the bow that way; you ought to be careful; that would spoil the riband; and I hate to see anything spoilt. Economy is a favourite maxim of mine. I like to inculcate it in all young people. I dare say you now despise me for it, Mrs. Russel; but I am never ashamed of being careful. Ay, Miss Vickery; I think you are of my opinion."

"That, indeed, I am, Mrs. Sharpquill. I never saw any good come of extravagance. I'm sure I've had enough experience of its evils in my time; but I always thank Heaven that I never blamed myself for any of them."

"Ay, ay, that's a great comfort, to be sure. These are splendid apartments of yours, Mrs. Russel. I did not know you had still intended to inhabit them yourselves. Were you not once talking of letting them again?"

"Yes, I have been intending that this some

time past," replied Mrs. Russel; "but while Mr. Deverell was here, we did not think so much about it. It is more than six months, however, since the old lady left us; and so I think we ought to begin to look about. We have advertised three or four times and nobody has applied."

"Hum! but I don't wonder; for it isn't every one could give the price for such grand apartments. The furniture itself is enough to frighten common people. Dear! what a handsome pier-glass! This must be a new purchase, I never recollect seeing it before."

"Yes, it is new; I have only had it three weeks. I'm glad you admire it," said the good-humoured Mrs. Russel; and, pleased with the attention bestowed on her purchase, she proceeded to lift up the muslin covering, and display the gilding of the frame. Mrs. Sharpquill looked, examined, and smiled. There was something in her smile which anything but pleased Alice.

"Well, upon my word, Mrs. Russel, you are a most fortunate woman. That must have cost you a handsome sum. I declare I never saw a more splendid plate."

"No; but the best of it all is," interrupted Mrs. Russel, laughing eagerly, "it did not cost *me* anything. It was a present, and I value it more for the sake of the giver than its own worth; though I know that is great. It is a

present from poor Walter. He once heard me admire this sort of glasses; and this was sent the morning after he went away. Poor fellow! I dare say he was afraid I might have objected to accept it, he is so kind and considerate; there was not a wish that I had which he would not have gratified had it been in his power."

"He certainly has quite shown his generosity in that, upon my word;" and again Mrs. Sharpquill lifted the gauze, and examined the gilding and carving of the frame. "But, by-the-bye, Mrs. R., does Mr. Deverell intend returning to reside here?"

"I'm sure I do not know. I hardly think he was certain himself; so much will depend on how he pursues his profession; and you know that is all a fancy of his own. I believe his grandfather never wished him to be anything. His fortune is more than sufficient to keep him as a gentleman; but Walter had always such ideas about independence."

"I've been told," replied Mrs. Sharpquill, with a meaning smile, at the same time fixing her eyes on Alice, "that the young gentleman intends making sure of a better fortune in marrying the daughter of that earl he visited so often. I hear that the match has been long intended by the parents of both, and was settled by the young gentleman himself, who, I under-

stand, obtained the lady's consent to marry him immediately on his return from Paris."

Alice did not raise her eyes from her netting; but she secretly hoped she did not change colour; for, as she attributed the speech of Mrs. Sharpquill to its real cause—spite, she was anxious not to show the least interest in it. But there is always a sudden thrill of the heart, that never fails to give a visible impetus to the blood, at the mention of the beloved name, which too often betrays the secret of the lover to those inquiring observers who have already their suspicions on the alert.

"Well, I don't believe that," replied Mrs. Russel, "for Walter's nature was too candid to be able to dissemble; and I have often joked him on that subject, and I am perfectly certain that, if such had been the case, he could not have concealed it from me. Indeed, I don't know how it could be; for, as to his visiting the earl often, I assure you, that is quite a mistake; for, in fact, he hardly went anywhere, and never was away from home in the evenings. I used often to laugh at him, and say I thought he liked home too well."

"Indeed! Ah, then perhaps I may have been misinformed. But Mr. S. told me some little stories, that he had from a certain quarter, about that earl's daughter; but it is wrong of

me to repeat such things. James was quite angry with me about that story before; though James is ready enough to laugh at some of Deverell's tricks, as he calls them. James always says he never could make him out; there was always so much mystery and pride about him."

"So I always thought," said Miss Vickery, with an important shake of the head, "I always said——"

"Come, come, Rachel," interrupted Mrs. Russel, in an indignant tone, "I won't hear another word against him. It is my opinion that he was good, generous, and noble-minded; and, if you think otherwise, I entreat you to keep your opinion to yourself."

Alice rose and left the room; for she felt that she might also be tempted to interfere, and she knew that her doing so could only tend to expose herself, and betray those feelings she wished most to conceal. Tears of indignation and contempt started to her eyes, as she entered the vacant parlour; but she hastily wiped them away, and, seating herself at the window (it being too dark to see to read or work), she amused herself with her own thoughts, till she became absorbed in a reverie of past times. She was roused, however, by a double knock at the door; and, looking out, she saw James Sharp-

quill, who, perceiving her, smiled and nodded. Although she wished to avoid his company, she did not quit her position; for she concluded he would proceed up stairs, where he would be ushered on his entrance. But, contrary to her expectation, and somewhat to her surprise, she heard him reply to the servant who bade him walk up stairs—

"Thank'ee, I'll just step in here, please. I've a word to say to Miss Alice." No sooner were these words uttered, than Mr. James made his appearance. The indispensable salutations having passed, he proceeded to seat himself with much coolness on a chair near where Alice still remained standing, with, "Well, Miss Alice, and how have you been this age; for it is more than one since I saw you?"

"Quite well; but it does not appear to me such a very long time since I saw you, Mr. Sharpquill," replied Alice, coldly.

"P'raps not; it depends solely on the pleasure one feels in another's company, how long the term of absence appears; and feeling so much as I do in yours, no wonder I think it a long time since we met. But, after all, it is a good while; nearly a month, I'm sure. Why, let me see, I haven't been here since that evening we had such fun laughing at Walter. Well, and after all, he wasn't such a bad sort of a

fellow; devilish proud though. But do you know why he didn't call to wish us good bye? I hope I didn't offend him, quizzing him that night. You don't think I did, do you?"

"I have no means of knowing what were Mr. Deverell's thoughts of you, Mr. Sharpquill, if indeed he thought concerning you at all; but I rather suspect he did not consider you to be capable of quizzing him," replied Alice, with a contemptuous smile.

"Well, well, never mind, we needn't care what he considered; but, I say, Alice, I wish you wouldn't call me *Mr. Sharpquill:* I don't like the name from *you.* Call me James, as you used to do when you were a little thing, when I used to build card houses and make paper boats for you." As he spoke, he ventured to take Alice's hand in his; and Alice, though she withdrew it, did not do so abruptly, for words of kindness, by whomsoever they might be uttered, never met with a repulse from her. A short pause ensued, which was broken by James.

"Alice," said he, "would you like to go to the play? because," proceeded he, drawing a ticket from his pocket, "I've got a free admission for this evening, and I mean to go myself; so I came to see if you would go with me. I don't think your mother would make any objections."

"I am much obliged to you for your kind offer, James," replied Alice, smiling; "but I am sorry I cannot accept of it. I am engaged this evening."

"What! you are not going out, are you? pooh, it can't be an indispensable engagement. I am sure you would enjoy it very much, so you must come. The play is Othello, and the afterpiece Lovers' Quarrels. I'm sure I've heard you say Othello was a great favourite of yours, and that was the very reason I chose to go to-night, for I might have had the ticket any time I liked; but I wanted to see what sort of a play Othello was, just because *you* admired it; so it wouldn't be fair to refuse to go after that."

"Very unfair, I admit," replied Alice, still smiling; "but," added she, unwilling to seem indifferent to what was well meant, "I assure you it is not in my power to go without great inconvenience to myself; and I am sure you would not wish to render me disagreeable."

"That I'm sure I shouldn't," exclaimed James, with much eagerness. "I declare I'll go this minute, and see if I can't get the ticket changed for another night. The chap I had it from said it was all the same when he gave it; so I'll put off having it until the next night Othello is to be acted, and then you will be able to go with me."

"Do not, I entreat you," replied Alice. "I assure you it is very unlikely that I can ever go with you; and therefore I do not wish you to defer for me."

"Nay, you don't say so! I'll wager you don't refuse next Tuesday. Othello will be acted then, and suppose we fix *then* to go?"

"Indeed you must excuse me," replied Alice. "I am not fond of the theatre, therefore I need not deceive you by promising; for I would decidedly rather not go at all."

"Well, you won't refuse *some day*," replied James, significantly.

Alice did not perceive his meaning smile, for she was looking out of the window, secretly wishing for his departure.

"I suppose, Mr. James," said she, at length, "you are aware that your mother is upstairs in the drawing-room?"

"Me, not *I*," replied James, starting and turning pale. "Lord, what brings her here; she's not going to stay, I hope?"

"I understand so. I thought that you were come for the purpose of taking her home."

"Not I, indeed; but I'll take myself off, since this is the way the wind blows. You don't think she knows I'm here, do you?"

"Really, I have no idea; but I think it is

most likely that she saw you from the window. You had better go upstairs."

"No, thank you; that's just what I don't wish to do. Well, it don't matter *if* she *has* seen me; but, if she hasn't, you needn't mention my having been here, please. It would only detain me from the theatre to go upstairs; and, as you are so very determined not to go with me, I'd better make haste off myself, for it's half-past five, and I'll not get a good place." And James rose, drew on his gloves, and took up his hat.

"Good bye, Alice; we part friends, I hope?"

"Certainly, James. Why not?"

"Oh, because I only hoped you hadn't taken ill my asking you to accompany me to the play. I meant it civil, I assure you."

"And I hope I have not taken it *uncivil*," replied Alice, laughing, as she extended her hand, which James eagerly seized.

"Alice," said he, hesitating, and taking off his hat with one hand, while he still held hers in the other. "I say, Alice"—(a pause, when suddenly resuming his wonted self-confidence, James proceeded)—"Well, it's best to be out with it at once, for I dare say what I've got to say won't offend you. Alice, I needn't ask you whether you are aware of my notions about you,

for I am sure you can't be blind to them. You know me pretty well, so I needn't give account of myself; but, if you are willing to take me for better or worse, I am willing to make you *Mrs. James Sharpquill junior!*"

This declaration, commenced rather abruptly, but towards the latter part announced in a most pompous tone, so completely paralysed the senses of Alice, that she was unable to reply. Her first impulse was to burst out laughing; but that was checked by the serious gaze of Mr. James, who, still holding her hand, now fixed his eyes on her face, as if expecting an instant reply. She attempted to liberate her hand, but he grasped it more firmly, and, reassured by her silence, resumed:—

"Come, come, don't be silly; name the day. I'm determined to go through it *now*, let mother go mad if she likes! So let it be decided. Say Sunday week, and make sure; delay will perhaps lose you all." And, in concluding, he pressed her hand to his lips.

Suddenly collecting her senses, which for a moment the ridiculous position she was in had dissipated, Alice hastily snatched her hand from his grasp.

"Mr. Sharpquill," said she, stepping back a few paces from where she stood, and speaking in a firm but perfectly cool tone, "I am not

aware of anything in my conduct that could authorise you to address me in this strain. If you know of any, perhaps you will explain, and I think it is in my power to undeceive you."

"What! Ah, I see the truth of the matter. I foresaw all this, but I am determined to pay no attention to it, and I wish you wouldn't. My mother has been *at you* with some of her nonsense; but don't mind a word she says. I tell you, I am determined to take my own mind; and I don't see why I shouldn't, I'm past one-and-twenty; and, besides, father hasn't the least objections; I know he hasn't, for I've often heard him say he did'nt see any business the parents had to interfere with the children's marriages. So cheer up, pretty Alice, it is all safe with you. You shall be Mrs. James Sharpquill junior, independent of whatever may be said to the contrary."

Had time been afforded for cool reflection, it is certain that the ludicrous would have predominated over Alice's feelings; but, as it was, she felt inclined to put a more serious end to the whole affair.

"Your words have fully discovered your meaning," said she, calmly, "and it would be folly to pretend ignorance, therefore your proposal claims a reply. Know, that it is utterly impossible, and perfectly certain, that I neither

can nor wish to regard you as you mention. If any word or action of mine has given you cause at any time to suspect me of thinking otherwise, I entreat your forgiveness; for nothing was, is, or always shall be, farther from my thoughts, than the possibility of ever regarding you in any other light than that of an old acquaintance; one whom I shall always wish well, but no more."

Alice paused: she had spoken exactly the truth, and perhaps more plainly than might have been expected; but she expected at least a *calm* answer, for Mr. James was not usually given to impetuous feelings. Howevèr, on the contrary, a flush of rage overspread his sallow face, as he replied,

"Well, on my soul, quite high! one would almost be tempted to think Miss Alice was addressing her inferior! So I have made a mistake; but I hope it won't be an unpardonable one; for, since the wind sits in that quarter, as the sailors say, I'm off; and, if you'll believe me, I'm quite as willing as yourself, anyhow. Hadn't I considered it a point of honour, I assure you I shouldn't likely have thought on it; but I see I'm not the man, and no doubt the pretty speech made just now was duly taught by Mr. Deverell. On my faith, I could almost have fancied it was himself speaking just

then; but since he's the happy man, I beg to be off. I have fulfilled my part of the bargain, so I wish you a good day, Miss Alice; and can only leave you my best wishes, that you may meet with a match suited to your real or imaginary rank."

Thus saying, Mr. James bowed low, in mock solemnity, though it was evident by his hurried tone and still flushed face, that the assumed manner of contempt was adopted to conceal more serious mortification. As he quitted the room, he darted a glance at Alice, which, under more romantic circumstances, might have been said to chill her blood, such was its expression of malignity and revenge.

The sound of the street-door shutting pretty loud followed, and the next moment, to her inexpressible relief, she saw the figure of her inamorato pass the window.

A momentary feeling of annoyance soon gave place to a strong sense of the ridiculous position of the whole affair, which, notwithstanding the evident seriousness of her lover's intentions, had excited little or no emotion in the breast of Alice; therefore she found no difficulty in obeying the summons to join the tea-table, and the rest of the evening passed without any other occurrence worthy of notice.

CHAPTER VI.

EARLY next day, Alice and Mrs. Russel set off for Mr. Sharpquill's office. At the request of the former, nothing was mentioned concerning their intended proceedings, though it was a difficult matter to baffle the repeated questions of Miss Vickery, whose curiosity took fire on the slightest appearance of mystery. As it was a very rainy day, they took a hackney-coach, which conveyed them to Gray's-Inn buildings.

Mr. Sharpquill was, as usual, seated at his desk. He was alone. Alice felt glad that James was not there, for she did not wish to meet him at present. Mr. Sharpquill looked up as they entered, and merely nodded his head, with a "Good morning."

"I have come to speak with you on business, Mr. Sharpquill," said Mrs. Russel, sitting down, having first drawn a chair near the desk where Mr. S. was seated. "I hope, therefore, you are at leisure?"

"Always at leisure for business, ma'am; business is leisure in itself. Ha, ha!"

"Then, Mr. Sharpquill, you know what we were speaking about yesterday morning?"

Mr. S. nodded.

"Well, I have come for the purpose of settling that business finally."

"Indeed! very happy to hear it." And the lawyer took up his pen, dipped it into the ink, and drawing a sheet of paper near him, prepared to begin.

"Stay a little," said Mrs. Russel, "I do not know if we can proceed so fast; I must first explain some circumstances. You are aware, for you were fully acquainted with the whole unfortunate event, that the death of the unknown mother of Alice put in my possession a quantity of valuable jewels. These, when I placed them in your care, I fully intended to appropriate to the future use of the child. Circumstances have not turned out so favourably as I expected. I am indebted to you for a large sum, which I should be utterly unable to pay, but for the generous sacrifice of this dear child, who——"

Here Mrs. Russel's voice failed her, and, unable to control her feelings, she burst into tears. Alice knew it was useless to endeavour to soothe emotions which could only be relieved by indulging in them; she therefore took the

opportunity of explaining to Mr. Sharpquill, as clearly as she was able, her intentions with regard to the jewels, at the same time stating the difficulties of Mrs. Russel's situation, and expressing her earnest anxiety that all should be settled with as much expedition as possible.

The lawyer listened in silence, and with attention. When she had concluded, he spoke.

"Are you aware of the amount of the debt owing by Mrs. Russel to me?"

"Yes; five hundred pounds, I believe."

"Are you aware of the value of the jewels?—they were valued by a jeweller."

"I understand they amounted to more than a thousand pounds; but perhaps they may not produce so much when sold. I am willing they should be disposed of as you please, and then we can ascertain if they will be sufficient to pay the debt."

Alice had never liked Mr. Sharpquill, and she anything but liked the scrutinising glance he fixed on her through his spectacles, or the sardonic smile that curled his thin lips.

"Perhaps," said he, in a somewhat jocular tone, "you are not aware that there was such a thing as *interest* mentioned in the bond. Young ladies like you are not in general accustomed to settle matters of business. If you have no ob-

jection I will talk of this with Mrs. Russel herself."

Alice felt her colour rise; but as there was some justice in the speech, she was silent.

"Thank you, thank you, my love," said Mrs. Russel, affectionately pressing her hand, "you have saved me the trouble of explaining, and now Mr. Sharpquill and I can settle what is best to be done. I need not explain my affairs to you, sir, for you know them better than I do myself. All I want to know is, how best to proceed with what Alice has proposed to you?"

"Let us begin at the foundation first then, if you please, madam," said the lawyer, again dipping his pen, though he did not proceed to write. "The case stands this way, you see:—sixteen years and ten months ago, I granted you, at your request, a loan of five hundred pounds. The interest, five per cent., was duly paid by you, but as duly borrowed back; by which proceeding I am legally and lawfully entitled, by the interest on the principal, and that incurred by the re-borrowed interest, to the sum of eleven hundred pounds. I ask no more than the law allows. I have charged within its limits, and therefore I am justly entitled to the full amount of its authorised demands. Now

so stands the case. The jewels I admit were valued at one thousand pounds, some odds. Probably the changes of fashion may render some of the trinkets of less value now, but the diamonds of course will keep their price. At all events, you are entitled to give them every chance. I have not the slightest objection to your naming the purchaser yourself. I shall be as just as the law can demand. I should willingly be generous, but my means do not permit me."

Here Mr. Sharpquill paused, as if expecting an answer; but the sudden announcement of such a fearful reality completely paralyzed the senses of Alice and her mother. The former saw in a breath all her hopes vanish; and the latter, who had never calculated this terrible accumulation of interest upon interest, felt as if stunned by a thunder-stroke.

"I am extremely sorry," said Mr. Sharpquill, at length, "that I am compelled to call for this money. Were it in my power, I should willingly defer any such demand, I would even accept a renewal of the bond; but it is utterly impossible. The money I want, and the money I must have. Ay, I mean no offence; I would never overstep the bounds of the law; but as matters stand at present, it is impossible for me to delay. I have a great respect for you, Mrs.

Russel, but you must be aware that one must consider one's-self first in this world. I have a family, who with me are content to limit their expenditure to the strictest scale of economy, but even that can't do without money; and you must admit it would be very hard to be straitened for *our* very limited wants, while what is legally our own was expended in superfluities. But I mean nothing personal. I wish to transact this unpleasant affair on as amicable terms as it is possible. And as to your present situation, you are aware I cannot even obtain my full amount. My claim, though a just one, will not be the first considered. In all debts, that of the landlord's rent must be first paid. You are at present a twelvemonth in arrear, that must be paid before I can touch a single farthing; and therefore, on consideration, you will not be surprised at my anxiety not to delay till I lose *all*."

"I am sorry, very sorry, that you should even be put to this trouble," said Mrs. Russel; "I would anxiously—but, I fear—I know it is not in my power. I had hoped by the sale of the jewels—but, as you say, that is not nearly sufficient to pay your legal claim; and I would not wish to dispute it. But could you suggest no means by which it could be managed? Would not a partial payment suffice for the present, and I shall give you not only my word, but my bond,

that I shall exert every means in my power to pay the rest as soon as possible?"

"Mrs. Russel," said Mr. Sharpquill, assuming a more familiar tone, laying down his pen, and taking off his spectacles, "I don't wish to hurt your feelings; but, since you press me so hard, I must be plain with you. You are living at a great expense. The house you are in was taken for the purpose of making money by it, no doubt; but, as matters have turned out, you are losing daily; therefore you can hardly expect in reason that any person can consent to keep up an establishment of that extent, without the slightest chance of any return for what they lay out. While Mr. Deverell was with you, I felt reluctant to express my opinions, although the amount of his payments did no more than discharge rent and taxes (for putting fine furniture in a house won't pay tradesmen's bills); but be that as it may, now that he is gone, and no chance of another filling his place, it is madness to think of continuing in that house; and it is my opinion there is no other alternative than giving it up as fast as possible, disposing of the expensive furniture, and henceforth living within your income."

Mrs. Russel grew pale; but she replied calmly, "I was in hopes of getting a tenant, who would occupy the most part of it. A gen-

tleman and his wife from the country were looking at it the day before yesterday; and, if they agree, they propose taking the first and second floors, at a rent of a hundred and fifty."

"If they agree! Ay, and after that how short a time may they stay! Certainly not for ever; and, when they go away, you are in the same predicament as before. Besides, the expense of advertisements, which already stand in my books to the amount of thirty pounds fifteen shillings. No, no! I am quite sure, it is impossible to continue in this way any longer. I have long considered every circumstance, and I am now perfectly decided; I cannot in justice to myself and family continue to maintain an expense so great, at a certain loss in the long run; therefore it would be useless to deceive you."

Here Mr. Sharpquill wiped his spectacles, and, putting them on, turned towards his desk, as if wishing to put an end to the conversation. Mrs. Russel rose slowly.

"I wish—" said she; but the wish died on her lips. Mr. Sharpquill had looked round, as she spoke; but, when she paused, he again turned to the desk, and took up his pen.

Alice felt her cheek glow with indignation, as she signed to her mother to hasten their departure.

"Mr. Sharpquill," said Mrs. Russel, in a firm tone, "perhaps you will name the day of payment?"

Mr. Sharpquill laid down his pen, and again turned round on his high stool.

"Mrs. Russel," said he, "I am, as I have already said, very sorry to be thus compelled to distress you. Necessity alone could urge me. I do not wish to prolong this disagreeable business. You know my necessities; therefore, I leave you to judge for yourself. As to your quitting your present residence, I advised you merely as a friend; but, as to the money owing to myself, I regret to re-assure you that I must have that on as short a term as it is possible to procure it. I leave the means of payment and the time to your own discretion, knowing that you must be well aware how long I can be expected to defer having what is my legal due. I trust, however, you will be able to settle all amicably. That is all I can say on the matter; and at present you must excuse me farther; for I am busy, and business must be attended to."

Here Mr. Sharpquill extended his hand and shook that of Mrs. Russel, with an apparent degree of cordiality. Alice coldly tendered hers; and, after due leave-taking, the two ladies quitted the office. The rain fell in torrents; but the coach still waited outside; and, getting

in, they made the best of their way homeward, as may well be supposed, with heavier hearts and sadder brows than they had set out in the morning.

Many and fruitless were the cogitations of Mrs. Russel and her Alice; fruitless, because they led to no conclusion. The sum due to Mr. Sharpquill alone was far beyond their means of paying; besides, there were various other debts, which, though of much less amount, were rendered equally impossible of payment by the sudden and unreasonable demand of the lawyer. Had Mrs. Russel even felt inclined to solicit assistance, she knew no one to whom she could apply. Indeed her acquaintances were so few that she had not many to choose among; and she felt assured that none of them were wealthy enough, even had they been willing, to afford her pecuniary assistance. She consoled herself, however, with the hope that Mr. Sharpquill would be more lenient than his word, and, after consideration, might be willing to be contented with part of his money; in which case she might have as much as would discharge the remainder of her debts, and then live in hope of better times.

Mrs. Russel always lived in hope. She was one whose easy and sanguine disposition could never look long on the dark side of things; and,

by the time the coach had stopped at her own door, she had cheered herself with the certainty that "all would turn out well."

Alice was not so sanguine. She felt far from at her ease with regard to the Sharpquills; for she had long observed signs of enmity, which boded no good; but she forbore to damp her mother's spirits, as she knew that despondency could avail nothing. Besides, although she felt uneasy, she did not believe that Mr. Sharpquill would act up to the extent of his declared intentions.

When she reached home, she found a note from her friend Emma Gardiner, inviting her to join a party of young friends at her house the following Wednesday. Alice would gladly have sent an excuse; but she knew that a refusal would hurt the feelings of her friend, especially as she had refused on a recent similar occasion. There was no alternative, but to write an acceptance, which she accordingly did.

There was a time, and that not long past, when Alice would have felt very happy at the prospect of a party at Emma Gardiner's. Youth is always eager for novelty, and fond of gaiety; but many circumstances made her sure that she could not be gay on that evening. In the first place, the affairs of her mother vexed and harassed her; and, in the second place, the last

time she spent an evening at Emma's, Walter was there. She remembered how happy they then were; he had talked to her, danced with her, and laughed with her; and now he was gone, and she felt that mirth and gladness could only remind her of his absence, and embitter the consciousness of her lonely heart. Besides, after what had passed on her last interview with Emma, she felt reluctant again to meet her.

Wednesday arrived, and the appointed hour arrived also. As the excitement of dressing and the kind assistance of her mother kept away other thoughts, Alice felt less of her former despondency. When arrived amid the scene of happy faces, and surrounded by light-hearted companions of her own age, she felt that the buoyancy of natural good spirits overcame all other feelings, and the evening passed happier than she could have imagined it was possible for it to do. Dancing was kept up till a late hour, and the affectionate solicitations of Emma detained Alice till the last of the guests had departed, and it was with difficulty she excused herself from remaining all the night. As she was alone, she returned home in a coach. Her spirits still elevated by the mirthful scene she had just quitted, her situation and the prospect of the future seemed to wear a brighter aspect. She thought of Walter; indeed his image had been

present with her amid the bright scene of the evening; but it had not as usual saddened her thoughts. She thought of his vows of love; she fondly hoped that these would one day be fulfilled; and she involuntarily repeated to herself—

"And wilt thou, loved one, think on me,
Though distant far I'm doomed to roam?
And can I hope, whate'er may be,
In thy warm heart to find a home?"

Walter had vowed to love her; his lips had never to her uttered the words of untruth: might she not rely on those vows? Oh, yes; he would return, with as true a heart and as kind a smile as she had ever known. The coach stopped at the door of her home, and Alice hastened, with a light step and lighter heart, to alight from it.

Somewhat to her surprise, her mother did not, as usual, appear to receive her; but it was very late, or rather early, and she was in all probability gone to bed. Mr. Gardiner had settled with the coachman, to save her the trouble, before she quitted his house; therefore she had nothing to do but quit it. The servant opened the door, but it was a new servant, therefore Alice asked no questions, but entered

the parlour, through the half-open door of which she saw a light burning within. Miss Vickery was sitting beside the table, alone, writing a letter; she looked up with no smiling aspect when Alice entered, then again resumed her occupation. Alice was not unaccustomed to similar welcomes; therefore she quietly proceeded to light a chamber candle that stood on the side table, when her aunt looked up again, with "Well, Miss, I hope you have enjoyed yourself?"

"Very much indeed, aunt," replied Alice, good-humouredly; "we have had *such* a pleasant party; I wish you had been there to have enjoyed it too—but I am afraid I have staid too late—where is mamma?—is she gone to bed?"

"I know nothing about her. I only know there's an execution and a bum-bailiff in the house, if that's any information to you."

Alice felt the blood fall from her heart, as if with a heavy weight, and it was with some exertion that she supported herself from sinking on the ground. At length, collecting all her resolution, she took up the lighted candle, and without speaking, hastened to her mother's chamber. There she found her alone, and, as she expected, in tears, which redoubled on her entrance. In spite of the sudden shock she had received, Alice possessed sufficient presence of

mind and good feeling to conceal any emotion, that could only serve to augment her mother's distress. With an aching heart, she summoned all her eloquence to soothe that grief, which, in a short time, exhausted its own power of indulgence. Mrs. Russel, for some time, wept bitterly; but tears cannot flow unceasingly, and she at last became sufficiently calm to be able to give account of the whole circumstance. An execution, or writ of distress, had been levied that evening (a few minutes after Alice had quitted the house) by Mr. Sharpquill, who had declared himself perfectly determined not to abate one farthing of his debt, or even defer immediate payment of the whole amount. Late as it was, Mrs. Russel had gone, the moment the execution had been entered, to Mr. Sharpquill's, where, alas! she had only obtained a renewal of his harsh declaration. He was perfectly resolved not to wait a day longer; indeed he could not, in justice to his family, besides the numerous other creditors who must eventually lose, should *his* debt be suffered to increase. He was willing to sell the jewels; but after paying the landlord's rent and king's taxes, his legal debt would not be more than half discharged. What he could get, however, he was determined to have: he would do nothing against the law, but he would not be deprived of what was

legally his own. After having related all this, Mrs. Russel again renewed her tears and lamentations, which Alice in vain strove to soothe by suggesting hopes which she herself did not feel. What rendered it more bitter to Alice, Mrs. Russel loudly and passionately upbraided herself, for having caused the ruin of her dear child, and having robbed her of all she possessed. Oh, gladly would Alice have given that, and a thousand times more, to have saved her from such misery; but, alas! even that could not avert the fast approaching ruin which must speedily overwhelm both.

That night was the most wretched Alice had ever spent: as it was far advanced when she came home, she felt no ways inclined to retire to bed, for she well knew that to sleep would be impossible; besides, she resolved to remain with her mother, as her presence, though it could not solace, at least might mitigate her grief. It was not till the morning sun was shining brightly through the window, that Alice was at last able to prevail upon her mother to try to rest for a short time. She urged justly, that the following day would, in all probability, require her active exertion, and therefore it would be best to prepare for it. Exhausted by emotion, Mrs. Russel at last consented; on Alice's giving her promise to go to bed also, and lying down, soon

fell fast asleep. According to promise, Alice retired to her own chamber, but she knew it would be useless to try to sleep. The bright beams of morning shone through the curtained window, and, as she entered, her eye caught her own figure, reflected in the looking-glass which stood on the toilet. She had still on the gay ball-dress she had worn on the preceding evening; and its splendour formed a striking contrast with her dejected mien. She hastily snatched off the wreath of artificial roses which decked her hair, (the bright hue of which contrasted fearfully with her countenance—pale with fatigue and agitation), and hastened to put aside the rest of her gaudy attire.

Many were the cogitations which passed in rapid succession through her mind, but alas! none tendered to proffer hope. She had hardly time to put on a more suitable dress, when she was summoned to her mother's room. Mrs. Russel was just awakened from a short and troubled sleep, which had in no way refreshed her. On the entrance of Alice, she again renewed her tears, with an emotion so prolonged and excessive, that it terminated in a violent hysteric fit. Mrs. Russel was by no means a strong-minded woman; and her nerves, long shaken by various trials, were unable to withstand this sudden shock. Through the

course of that whole day, Alice watched by her bedside, and as one paroxysm succeeded another, strove, by all means in her power, to alleviate that, over which no soothing has the slightest effect.

Towards night, Mrs. Russel got better; but remained in such a state of exhaustion as to be incapable of the slightest exertion of mind or body. Poor Alice was also quite exhausted, so that she was glad to lie down in bed, where fatigue soon brought sleep to her relief.

She awoke the following morning, much refreshed; and to her great delight, found her mother almost well, and perfectly calm and willing to converse with her, as to all the possible means of proceeding. Alice was the more rejoiced to find her so, from the reason that there was no other person to whom she could apply, to advise or assist her.

Miss Vickery, always unkind and unreasonable, became utterly intolerable on the occurrence of any misfortune. Either from her natural disposition, or with a view to save herself the trouble of giving consolation, she invariably pronounced all misfortunes to be caused by the folly or crime of the sufferer; and set herself to work, to punish accordingly, as far as was in her power. Alice tamely bore all the bitterest invectives that were poured out

against herself; and, with the utmost difficulty, she defended her mother from worse treatment; but in this instance, she exerted more authority than she had ever before assumed, and steadily refused all entrance into her mother's chamber, until she should be sufficiently recovered to judge for herself.

Just as Alice and her mother were vainly striving to invent some possible means of arranging matters, a loud double knock at the street-door announced the arrival of visitors; and before time was granted to say "*Not at home,*" the servant announced the names of three ladies, distant acquaintances of the family. These ladies had come from a considerable distance, Chelsea, Brompton, or some of those places, for the purpose of spending the day with Mrs. Russel, by whom they had, for years, been invited to choose the *first* fine day, and come to look over the British Museum, and dine at her house, which was so conveniently close by. Alice in vain privately urged Mrs. Russel to plead engagements, and put them off till another day; but no, Mrs. Russel would not hear of such a thing, she was one of those persons who would rather sacrifice a real advantage, than undergo a false humiliation. "They would think it so very rude; besides, they would be sure to suspect something; and she

would not for the world they did so—No, no; don't show any difference. Alice must accompany them to the Museum, and they should come back to dinner; they wouldn't stay late, for they were sure to go away with the last omnibus."

Alice did accompany them; and with a heavy heart, and a mind anxiously and intently occupied about far different subjects, looked over and forced herself to appear interested in, the whole of the Museum. There is perhaps no task more difficult to perform, than that of seeming interested and giving your attention to one subject, while your mind is occupied by another. She was relieved when the hour of four summoned her friends, whose endless curiosity she thought would never have terminated voluntarily; and they returned home with her to dinner. A shabby-genteel-looking man was talking with her mother in the drawing-room when they entered it. Mrs. Russel merely noticed him to her friends as a "person upon business," and he hastily quitted the room. Alice was shortly after summoned out of the room to speak to her mother, who had followed the stranger; she found her standing on the stairs.

"Are you sure you have shut the door?" said she, speaking low; "that is the man who has been taking an inventory of the furniture. He

demands a guinea for his trouble, and I have not one in the world: what am I to do?"

Alice was equally at a loss; she had not the half or quarter of such a sum in her possession, and her heart sank within her at the other circumstances which surrounded her.

"Oh dear, if those detestable women would only go away!" exclaimed Mrs. Russel, "I am sure I hardly asked them to stop dinner; do you think Rachael would lend me a guinea?"

"I really do not know. I should rather not try it."

"No, no, the man says he can't wait; go you, and call her out of the room; no, no, go in yourself first, and tell her I want to speak to her; say it is about the dinner, else they'll be sure to suspect something, but make haste."

Alice obeyed; she sighed, as she reflected, how all this anxiety and duplicity might have been spared, but for a false shame. Miss Vickery left the room on being requested, and Alice was left alone to exert all her faculties, to amuse and divert the attention of her guests, from the subject which occupied all her feelings.

In less than half an hour, however, dinner was announced; and, to Alice's relief, her mother appeared at the head of the table, perfectly composed, and even in high spirits. Miss Vickery looked very cross, but that was of no

rare occurrence, and therefore not to be wondered at.

At length, as the longest day has an end, nine o'clock arrived, and the ladies went home with the nine-o'clock omnibus. Never was departure hailed with such rapture; and when the street-door was fairly closed, and the servant, who had escorted them to the corner of Tottenham-court-road, returned, with information that she had seen them all safe off in the omnibus, Alice felt as if her heart was relieved of a load inexpressible. Mrs. Russel was relieved also; for she had exerted herself, with almost superhuman efforts, to maintain the appearance of excellent spirits; but the false excitement was the cause of a proportionate dejection; and the moment that Miss Vickery opened her mouth to speak, Mrs. Russel burst into tears, and gave way to another violent hysteric fit, in which she had to be carried, screaming, to bed.

CHAPTER VII.

Next morning came. It was Saturday, a beautiful day; but when the mind is oppressed with anxiety, the finest day seems to shine as if in mockery of the heart that cannot enjoy it.

There was too good reason for the agitation of Mrs. Russel. The man, who on the preceding day had taken the inventory of all that was in her house, had also been commissioned to inform her that a sale must take place without delay, as his employer (Mr. Sharpquill) was determined not to defer a day longer than the law demanded. He acknowledged the possession of the jewels; but these he had caused to be included in the same inventory, and was resolved to sell them also at the public auction, which was to take place the following Thursday, on the premises, unless immediate payment of the debt satisfied his claims. Mrs. Russel had already exerted every means of persuasion, and therefore she knew that no further appeal would have the slightest effect on the hard-hearted attorney; and as there was not a friend in the world from

whom she could hope for succour, there was no alternative but to submit.

In this trying juncture, it may be supposed Alice's thoughts reverted to Walter. "Oh that he were here!" she thought. He was rich, at least: she knew his purse had never been limited. He was generous, for she knew him to be so, and an appeal from *her* could not fail to obtain his succour. But he was gone,—he had left London uncertain as to where his abode should be when he reached Paris; and, although he had been absent nearly a month, he had not written or sent any notice to inform them of where or how he was situated, and it was impossible for any communication to reach him, without a proper address. To him, therefore, it was not in her power to apply. To whom else could she do so? She remembered on one occasion, a year or more ago, that her mother had obtained a sum of money on promised interest from a bill-broker and money-lender, who lived somewhere in the city. That man was a perfect stranger to them; but he knew the situation of her mother, and might consent to a similar bargain, as he had been duly paid for that which he had formerly contracted. If he would, a sum might be obtained, which, added to the jewels, would be sufficient to pay the demand of Sharpquill, and

prevent the fearful crisis which he threatened. She did not fear that, at some future time, she should be enabled to pay the loan, either by the fruits of her own labour, or the aid of that *one*, whose aid, she felt persuaded, could never be sought in vain.

She communicated her scheme to Mrs. Russel, from whom she obtained a ready assent; for, despairing of all hope in herself, she eagerly caught at every proposal from another. At Alice's request, she wrote a note to Mr. M., requesting the loan of two hundred pounds, (three hundred being the sum he had previously lent,) and promising full interest, and an acceptance at four months' date. This was a large sum, but as he had once lent a larger, it was still to be hoped he might consent. On the previous occasion, two securities had been given; one of these had been Mr. Sharpquill himself, and the other Mr. Gardiner. Mr. Sharpquill, of course, could not be appealed to on this occasion; but Mrs. Russel trusted that Mr. Gardiner would not refuse; and she trusted also that, if required, she might procure another. But before ascertaining whether these *trusts* were well or ill founded, she wrote the note containing the proposal to Mr. M., and Alice was accordingly despatched with it, for the purpose of obtaining a sure and immediate answer. Mr. M.'s office was in

Nicholas-lane, Lombard-street, a long way off, and through the crowded city; but Alice was glad of any personal exertion, as her mind was too agitated to bear to remain inactive. She set off about eleven o'clock; and, notwithstanding the strict injunctions she received from her mother to be sure to take the omnibus and not fatigue herself by walking, she proceeded on foot.

As she pursued her way, the ceaseless crowd, hurrying to and fro in all directions, served rather to increase than remove her depression of spirits. It is a strange desolate feeling, when one reflects on the countless thousands who cross one's path, all intent on some purpose, but all equally indifferent to each other—to reflect that each individual of that passing throng has feelings, affections, and friends, who are dear to him; for these, doubtless, he would exert his utmost; but for you, what signifies it to him, whether you pass him in joy or sorrow?—whither or on what errand you are hastening? A glance, a passing thought, if even that be bestowed, is all. He pursues his way, forgetting and forgot, by the thousands who have crossed or may yet cross his path. Talk of the solitude of the desert! There at least there is peace, and you can commune with your own thoughts. It is in the midst of a crowded city that man feels the true

sense of his own helplessness and solitude. Alice indulged in these reflections, and pursued her way with a heavy heart. The narrow dirty lane, and the appearance of the dingy dark dwelling of Mr. M., in no way contributed to heighten her spirits. It was No. 7, the door leading to the street was open; and on one side of the door-post was painted in black letters, on the white paint,—first floor, Mr. A. Brown; second floor, Mr. M.

This was the right house; and she proceeded to ascend the narrow dark dirty staircase. On reaching the second landing-place, she paused a few seconds, for her heart failed her as she lifted her hand to tap at the low uninviting door. The name of Mr. M., on a brass plate, left no doubt she was right, and, at length summoning courage, she knocked gently on the pannel. Receiving no answer, she again knocked louder; but all being silent, she ventured to open the door. That was not without some little difficulty performed, as a weight and pulley within resisted any slight effort; but the instant she entered, the weight swung the door from her hand, and it closed with a loud noise, leaving her standing in the interior of the room.

It was a small low-roofed apartment, with a large desk in the middle of the floor, which almost filled it. A door at the further end,

showed part of another room; and a window, which looked over a back court, lighted that in which she stood. A tall gentlemanly-looking person was seated at that window, apparently intent on examining a map or chart which he held in his hand, for he started at the sound of the door; and on perceiving Alice, rose suddenly from his seat. Bowing slightly, but with gentlemanly politeness, he handed her the chair on which he had been sitting, there being no other in the room. Alice declined it with a slight gesture, and being too much confused to speak, handed him the letter she had brought with her. He smiled as he glanced at the superscription, and returning it to her, said, in a polite and even kind tone, "Mr. M. has just gone out, but if you would wait for a few minutes, I know he will return to attend to this."

Alice coloured with inexpressible confusion, as she endeavoured to stammer out an apology; but the steadfast gaze of the stranger disconcerted her too much to admit of uttering a word. She had never seen Mr. M., but there being no person except this stranger in the office, and her eagerness to fulfil her errand, had left no time to doubt that it was he. As she now glanced at the figure and mien of her incognito companion, she wondered at her own mistake. The stranger was most splendidly attired, and

a nameless something, about his air and manner, showed him to be one who belonged to the highest ranks of society. Young people are all physiognomists; and Alice fancied that the countenance of the stranger was the index of a superior mind, and a cultivated understanding. She had just accepted the chair, which was again silently offered to her, when the door opened, and Mr. M. entered.

"Beg ten thousand pardons, my lord," exclaimed he, taking off his hat, and panting for breath, as he hastily threw a quantity of papers on the desk; "beg pardon, my lord, but Mr. Brown was such a time before he could find them, that I am sure your lordship must be out of all patience waiting so long; but here they are, and all right too, as your lordship will see, if you will do me the honour to examine them."

"Quite right, I have no doubt, Mr. M., we shall look over them together by-and-by; but here is a lady, who has been also waiting your return, if you please attend to her first."

Mr. M. looked round, and eyed Alice with a scrutinising and inquiring glance. He was a short thick-set man, with a very red face, and Alice boded no good from its expression, but she rose, and handed him the note. Mr. M. took off his spectacles, wiped them, and put them on

again, then going up to the window, broke up the note and read it. Alice could not see the expression of his face, for his back was turned until he had finished the perusal; but her heart sunk within her, as he quietly proceeded to tear the note in pieces, and throw it on the empty stove. "There's no answer," said he, sharply.

Alice rose to depart,—again she paused.——

"Then you cannot agree to the proposal?" said she, in a faltering voice.

"Most decidedly not," replied Mr. M., in a tone of supercilious contempt.

Alice felt the blood mount to her brow at a repulse which, though unfeeling, was the consequence of her situation. As she turned to depart, she involuntarily glanced towards the stranger, and beheld his eyes fixed on her, with the same intent gaze as before had disconcerted her. She hurried out of the room, the door slammed after her, and she again descended the stairs.

"Who is that beautiful girl?" inquired the nobleman of Mr. M., when she had quitted the room.

"Really, on my word, I can hardly tell, your lordship. She is the daughter of a person by whom I have lost a great deal of money; and who wishes me to be fool enough to lose more."

"What is her name? or where does she live?"

"Her name, your lordship? upon my word I hardly know. She and her mother are but lately returned from abroad. They are going again; and I really am unacquainted with where their present temporary residence may be."

His lordship inquired no further. He had been struck with Alice's personal beauty; but he was anxious to proceed with the business that brought him hither, and as soon as he began it, she held no further place in his memory. Mr. M. was glad of having silenced an inquiry which he judged would only tend to trouble him, and divert his lordship's attention from business, which he hoped would tend to no small advantage to himself. The Earl of Dartmore, a rich man, and having the means, might take the fancy of being generous, and generosity is always profitless to every one but the object of it.

Alice pursued her way homeward;—wearied, sad, and spiritless. She had walked very fast on her way thither, which, added to her disappointment, now made her feel unusually fatigued. A drizzling rain had begun to fall, which rendered the pavement dirty and slippery, and much impeded her progress. As she passed the end of Southampton-buildings, in Holborn, she felt a strong impulse to go to Mr. Gardiner's, and acquaint her friend of what had happened. She

could at least find a consolation in her sympathy; but she was deterred by the sudden remembrance of what had recently passed between them. Her conscience smote her for having acted almost a deceitful part towards Emma, in not disclosing her own feelings towards Walter, or at least confessing, what had passed between him and herself. Yet she felt that would be impossible, and under such circumstances could she seek consolation from her candid and all sincere friend, with such a secret concealed in her own heart? That heart ached bitterly as she turned away, and proceeded to her own sad home, saddened by the consciousness that she herself must be the bearer of tidings which could only deepen the gloom of its inmates.

Another dreary afternoon passed away. The next day came—it was Sunday. When any affliction depresses the spirits, Sunday is a dreary day. Alice almost wished that some visitor would call to vary the scene, and she felt an absolute thrill of pleasure at the sound of a double knock, which announced the arrival of one. It was evening, and she had just quitted the tea-table, where she had escaped from the harassing volubility of Miss Vickery, who was endeavouring to render their situation as disagreeable as was possible, by incessant animadversions and regrets.

With that pardonable curiosity of which many young ladies must be conscious, Alice stepped out to the landing-place, for the purpose of ascertaining who was admitted; and she was somewhat surprised, when the voice of James Sharpquill inquired if Mrs. Russel were at home. He had a note in his hand, and the servant immediately ushered him into the parlour, where her mistress and Miss Vickery were still seated at tea.

Anxious as Alice felt to know what was his errand, she was reluctant to encounter him; for she augured too truly, that the present circumstances were to him a matter of triumph, and she was not willing to add to it by any apparent humiliation. She re-entered the drawing-room, where she sat down with a palpitating heart, to await his departure, which she doubted not would be very shortly.

She had not waited many minutes before she heard the parlour-door open, and the next moment heard the voice of her aunt talking loudly to some one, following her up stairs.

"Step up to the drawing-room for a few minutes, Mr. James, since you won't take a cup of tea. You will find Alice there, and she will talk to you, while my sister is writing the answer. It is useless to keep you sitting without any amusement;" and the drawing-room door was

thrown open, before Alice had time to make her escape, and Mr. Sharpquill jun. entered.

"Just sit down, James. Alice, amuse Mr. Sharpquill a little. I must leave you, to speak to my sister;" and Miss Vickery disappeared, closing the door after her.

Alice was anxious not to show any difference in her manner, she therefore extended her hand to the awkward-looking James, who still stood in the middle of the floor; and, as kindly as she could, bade him take a chair.

James was awkward-looking; but his awkwardness was the mere effect of his personal appearance; for no person could be less troubled with diffidence, or modesty. He readily seated himself, placed his hat on the table, took out his pocket-handkerchief, blew his nose, and hemmed with some significance, as if he was debating how to say something.

"Do you not find it a very pleasant evening?" said Alice, anxious to commence any common topic to avoid any serious conversation.

"Vastly, Miss; that's to say if I had been in a pleasant trim myself; hem—but, hem—you know the errand is everything, when one goes for a walk, one would need to have a pleasant purpose in view to be agreeable."

"Certainly—I thought the day was a little too warm, but there is a delightful breeze stirring

now;" and, as she spoke, Alice walked to one of the windows and opened it. Mr. James walked after her, and standing in the same recess, leant himself, half-confidently, half-sentimentally, against the window sill.

"Miss Alice," said he, after a pause, "I am very sorry about what has happened. If you'll take my word for it, it's none of my doings."

"I have no reason to suppose it is," replied Alice, anxious to take him on his own terms, that she might more speedily put an end to the conversation; but Mr. James was not so easily baffled.

"I might, to be sure," pursued he, in a very significant tone, "I might have used more arguments against it, but I was so afraid lest you might think any interference of mine was presumptuous, therefore I would not venture too much, or take anything upon me, else, I dare say, father would be more inclined to take my advice than any one else's; but as it is, I hope all will turn out well. Mr. Deverell of course is informed of it, and he will no doubt set matters to rights; at least so I thought, and that made me not like to interfere." "You were perfectly right," replied Alice, calmly, for she saw too plainly the contemptible malignity of that speech to betray herself by any appearance of the indignation she felt.

"Of course, as there was no call upon you,

you would have been quite unjustifiable to have interfered in the matter."

"Not a bit, not a bit, I assure you, I never should have hesitated; only, knowing, as I did —feeling convinced I mean—that Mr. Deverell was equally willing, and much more able than myself to do all that was required, I judged I should get no thanks for it; but—hem—upon my word, as the matter stands, even now, if I thought he wouldn't behave as he ought, I'd be as willing as ever to offer my services; and though I say it, that shouldn't say it, I could be of more use than anybody else in this business;" and, as he spoke, Mr. James brushed up his hair, settled his neckcloth, and assumed an air of superior importance.

Alice hesitated for a moment how best to retort to this speech, and had just decided that silence was the best answer, when the sound of her aunt's well-known footsteps on the landing-place of the stairs relieved her from the emergency. James also heard the footfall, and startling, hastily seized Alice by the hand, with—

"Come, now, once for all, will you have me? and if so, I give you my promise that all this business shall be put an end to."

With impulsive indignation, which overcame all her intended philosophy, Alice snatched her hand from the insulting grasp.

"Mr. Sharpquill!" exclaimed she, in a voice at once loud and tremulous with passion, "in future I shall take care it shall not be in your power to add insolence to injustice." Thus saying, she quitted the room, fearful lest the excitement of her feelings might impel her to give utterance to the full extent of her just contempt. She was met by her aunt, who, entering at that very moment, distinctly overheard the last sentence, but Alice did not stay to be questioned. She hurried up stairs to her own room, where, throwing herself on the bed, she gave way to her indignant and insulted feelings in a flood of tears.

Much as she despised James Sharpquill, she could not be insensible to her own dependent situation, nor to how much circumstances had placed her in his power; and, although she scorned the contemptible mind that could thus triumph in its privileges, she felt the triumph was nevertheless as true.

Alice was not deceived, neither had Mr. James boasted falsely of his power in the present business. In fact, it was his advice which had instigated his father to the harsh proceedings against Mrs. Russel.

From trifling causes, great effects are often produced, although it is perhaps hardly just to regard as trifling an event of such importance as

a personage of James Sharpquill's self-esteem requesting the hand of any lady in marriage; at least, it is certain Mr. James himself did not regard it as such; but, be that as it may, we leave to our reader to place any value he or she may please on the event. It is ours merely to relate the result.

It so happened (as our reader may easily suppose), that Mrs. Sharpquill was looking from the drawing-room window of Mrs. Russel's house on the evening when her hopeful son James first made his proposals, which our reader will probably recollect, and somewhat to her surprise saw her son James crossing the street in the contrary direction from the house. As she had heard the street-door close a few moments before that, she very naturally concluded that her son had just quitted the house, and if so, he had been in it unknown to her. This occasioned more uneasiness than astonishment; for Mrs. S—— had long suspected a latent flame to exist in the young gentleman's heart, occasioned by the charms of Alice; and, judging wisely, she made no remarks to Mrs. Russel or her sister, who were seated in the room at the time, and were, or as she suspected, pretended to be, ignorant of the circumstance; but she secretly determined to question James himself, and doubted not to get the truth of the whole affair.

Accordingly, when she returned home, that same evening, she set to work to *sound* James as she termed it, on the subject. James, still smarting with indignation at what he deemed Alice's insult of his dignity, and irritated at finding himself detected by his mother in a clandestine affair, determined to get out of the scrape with flying colours, and therefore, in reply to her questions, boldly declared that, having long suffered tender persecution from the attentions of Alice, he had (he would confess) yielded to the charms of the sorceress; but that, on the last interview, which had been found out by his mother, Alice had reproached him with faithless and treacherous conduct in not speedily uniting himself to her; and, upon his attempting to reason against any rash step of the sort at present, had abused him for deceiving her and harbouring dishonourable intentions; that he had attempted to soothe her by argument, and would even have entered into solemn engagement to make her his wife at a future period, but she was too excited to listen to him, and he was obliged at length to seek refuge in hasty departure from her vindictive threats and reproaches. This vile falsehood served its intended purpose. It was believed; and his mother was sufficiently exasperated against the unfortunate Alice, as to make it more than probable that

the latter would be somehow punished for her conduct. To guard against detection, James obtained a solemn promise from his mother, that she would never mention the circumstance to any human being,—a promise which she granted on condition that he pledged himself for ever to abandon the thoughts of Alice. James pledged himself with some real, but much feigned reluctance; for he well knew, that any suspicion on his mother's part of his still harbouring the attachment, would serve to heighten her implacability towards Alice, on whom he was determined to be revenged. Mrs. Sharpquill was no less determined, and, although she had promised not to mention the matter, she did not think it at all necessary to keep her word any further than suited her own purposes; and, accordingly, that very night she related the whole of the circumstances to her husband. Mr. Sharpquill was not a man to be ruled by any one, far less his wife; but when his own sentiments accorded with another's, like all persons, he was apt to be influenced. He had long been fearful of ultimately losing the payment of his bond; and as the interest had increased, his fears had become more urgent, and he felt no longer indifferent when his wife talked of Mrs. Russel's extravagance, her dishonourable principles, and her certain bankruptcy, all of which Mrs. Sharpquill

took care to represent again with redoubled energy, when she detailed the falsehood which James had framed. Mr. Sharpquill was by no means willing that his son should marry; very few fathers are, and, above all things, he was very indignant at any clandestine affairs of the sort. Besides, this was an excellent opportunity of justifying himself in his own conscience, in proceeding to demand his money from people whom he could think unworthy of possessing it; therefore he avowed his determination of putting a stop to all such nonsense, by ending the farce altogether. It was a fine story truly, that he was to keep up people like them, in a far finer house than himself, and living riot at his expense, and at the same time plotting to entice his son to inveigle himself, and disobey his father. He therefore lectured James duly against all such conduct in future, and declared his resolution to punish the offending party with all due and just severity.

When things were arrived to this crisis, it is not unlikely that James would have willingly retracted his words; but the deed was done; he had told the falsehood, and he rather chose that the innocent should suffer than further expose himself by a confession. Further, he felt affronted by the rejection of Alice, and half hoped that this punishment might serve to

humble her, if not to make her willing to consent to his proposal; for, in spite of his indignation, he still wished and hoped that he might one day find favour in her sight. He loved Alice, but the nature of that passion (so sacred in the hearts of the noble-minded), as it existed in his bosom, we leave it to higher judges to analyze.

Let us return to Alice, to whom the present misfortunes, from whatever cause they originated, were bitter enough to endure.

She had not remained long in the position where we last left her, when her bed-room door was thrown open with much violence, and Miss Vickery, with a face swoln with fury, burst into the room.

"Your humble servant, madam," said she, as Alice started up, "I humbly beg pardon for intruding on your tears; only, as I have just discovered how much we stand indebted to you, I could not do less than come and thank you for your goodness." Alice stared in astonishment, unable to question or reply, while the enraged lady proceeded.

"Yes, indeed; we had not the least idea till now that we owed all our present difficulties, all the ruin, the beggary, disgrace, and misery, that hastens to overwhelm us, to *you*, and your insolent, presumptuous conduct. You beggar's brat. *You* whom we took for charity, too.

But it serves us quite right; we are only punished for our own folly."

"In the name of Heaven, what means all this?" exclaimed Alice, whose wonted gentleness was unable to sustain this unexpected torrent of abuse unmoved, as her feelings were excited by other circumstances.

"What does it mean?" retorted Miss Vickery, exasperated to worse rage by the unexpected sharpness of Alice's reply; "I dare say you know well enough what it means. You low, vile, ungrateful being! And so, in sooth, you presume to think yourself too good for any decent man's son. You! an outcast, contemptible, friendless wretch! But I scorn to reproach you; it is unworthy of myself to address you. I leave it to your own conscience what punishment you deserve, for bringing ruin and disgrace on those who saved you from starvation. I thank Heaven my sister's eyes are opened now. My words have come true at last. She'll see what I always told her. She'll repent, and curse the day she ever troubled herself with any low, beggarly creature, especially one whose own parents didn't think it worth taking care of. She'll see all that I told her so often; and, thank Heaven, she'll now live to repent her folly."

Here Miss Vickery paused, absolutely for

want of breath, and at that moment Mrs. Russel entered the room, upon which the exhausted lady uttered a scream of hysterical passion, and rushed out of the apartment in a flood of tears.

For some moments, Alice and her mother remained standing gazing at each other with amazement; but as both were well accustomed to such excesses, they knew it was needless to follow her. At length Alice inquired—"What *is* the matter?"

Mrs. Russel had been weeping. Her eyes were still red with tears, but she burst into a fit of laughter, which at once assured Alice that there was nothing of consequence had occurred.

The facts were simply these:—Miss Vickery had not only overheard the *last* words that passed between Alice and James Sharpquill, but, in fact, had listened to the whole conversation; and from what passed, she had formed a hasty conclusion on the real state of the case. Alice had refused the proffered suit of James Sharpquill, and, of consequence, Alice was the cause of all that Mr. Sharpquill senior had done. This was the instant decision of Miss Vickery, and she lost no time, the moment James quitted the house, to hasten and give vent to her fury, as above related. Mrs. Russel laughed heartily at the whole affair, Alice having previously informed her of the first pro-

posals of her inamorato, which, at the time, Alice herself was inclined to make a jest of. She felt anything but disposed to jest now.

Mrs. Russel informed her, that the note which Mr. James had brought, was from his father, and contained the information that he had sold the jewels for the sum of seven hundred pounds. James had also brought the note of the jeweller who had purchased them; and therefore there was no reason to doubt the truth of the statement. In fact, the sum was as much as could be reasonably expected; and more, certainly, (as Mr. Sharpquill said in his note,) than would likely have been got by putting them up for sale at the public auction. So much of the debt owing to him was therefore paid; but there was still the sum of three hundred and fifty pounds, besides the landlord's rent, for which another execution was to be levied on the following day. "Therefore Mrs. Russel could not think it abrupt or peremptory that the sale must take place on the next day, Tuesday; and preparations must be made as speedily as possible."

"Such were the contents of the note, signed, "Your humble servant, James Sharpquill;" of which James junior had readily volunteered to become the bearer, for the pleasure of wit-

nessing the vengeance due to his insulted dignity.

Alice restrained her feelings, lest she might excite those of her mother; and Mrs. Russel was more composed than she had been since the first of the misfortune. It is often the case, especially with those who give vent to their emotions, that the first shock is all. The mind becomes resigned after things are arrived at the worst. Alice had never yielded to *her* feelings. Her nature was mild and submissive; but she suffered not less deeply because silently. While in her mother's presence, she sustained her spirits by an assumed cheerfulness, and strove to impart hopes which she knew were never to be fulfilled. But alone, at night, in her own solitary chamber, her heart sank beneath the weight of affliction, and she wept in the bitterness of a crushed and agonized soul.

"Oh, truly—too truly, am I a *friendless wretch!*" she exclaimed, as she laid her aching head on her pillow, but not to sleep. The light was still burning. She had several times thrown herself on the bed, dressed as she was, but as often started up again, and paced the floor with hurried steps. Her mind was totally absorbed by that one idea,—the prospect of inevitable ruin which threatened her dearest and only

friend, and her own utter helplessness and utter inability to avert it.

She thought of Walter. In the desolation of despair, where is the suffering heart so likely to meet with sympathy, as from the one who has plighted eternal love! But Walter was gone; and although the distance that separated them was not great, her ignorance of his local habitation rendered it as impossible to communicate with him, as though "half the convex world" had parted them from each other.

More than four weeks had now elapsed since Walter's departure, and they had received no letter. A newspaper, posted at Calais, according to agreement, had announced his arrival there; but no other notice had been sent. What could have caused this conduct? Hitherto Alice had framed many excuses to her own mind, and she had felt beyond all measure indignant at the insinuations of Miss Vickery, who attributed it to wilful neglect; but, as day after day passed on, her own heart smote her with suspicions which she in vain sought to lull.

The present misfortunes were great. The prospect of a worse future was before her eyes. She knew Mrs. Russel had no funds, no property but the furniture of the house, and had already overdrawn two years of her income. What then was their resource? Alice herself

possessed nothing—nothing at least that she could justly claim as her own. There was *one* resource, but from that her better nature shrunk, though she was strongly tempted. Was it to yield her hand to James Sharpquill? No, no; such a thought never for a moment swayed her; but, as she leant over her open writing-desk, she took from a secret drawer in it a small slip of paper, on which she gazed long and doubtingly. It was a bank note of *one thousand pounds!* With that sum she might relieve her mother from every difficulty, and again restore peace and plenty to their home. She had the power in her own hands, without even the dread of possible future check. None could, would, or dared know, except—her own conscience, but that commanded her to forbear. "No, no," she mentally exclaimed, "rather let me perish of want, than break a trust that must lose to myself, for ever, my own peace of mind." She folded the note, replaced it in the secret drawer, and hurried from her thoughts the very remembrance of a secret which she had pledged her honour to retain sacred and inviolate.

Satisfied with herself for having thus conquered the temptation, other thoughts and hopes now crowded to her mind. From a child, Alice had always felt an anxious wish to be independent; and with that view she had laboured

hard to acquire those accomplishments by which she might be enabled to become so. Her idea had ever been, to obtain a situation as a governess, but Mrs. Russel had always been unwilling to part with her, and had resolutely opposed the taking of any steps that might lead to such a separation; but now something *must* be done, and Alice determined to proceed about it. She had few acquaintances, and nothing of what is termed "connexion," but she remembered an Hon. Mrs. Varley, to whom she was personally introduced at an assembly about a year before. That lady had bestowed much praise on her harp-playing, and even gone so far as to say that she wished much for such a teacher to her two little girls. Alice did not think much about that remark at the time, but now, after the lapse of a year, she recollected it like a gleam of hope. To that lady she determined to apply, and offer herself in the capacity of a teacher to the children; and accordingly, late as it was, she seated herself at her writing-desk, where she sketched a note to that effect, which she resolved to despatch the following day. This task done, she felt her mind much more at ease, and retired to bed, where she soon sunk into a refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

"To-morrow is the day of sale," said Mrs. Russel, as she sat, leaning her head on her hand, at the silent and joyless supper table.

"I fancy you don't intend to be present," replied Miss Vickery, with a sneer.

"Why really, Rachel, that is just what I am thinking about; I'd rather leave the house, but, besides not knowing well where to go, Jane says there will be so many thieves about it, during the bustle, that it would be much better to remain."

"Thieves! to be sure; but what affair of yours is that? I reckon *you* have nothing now to lose."

Mrs. Russel sighed deeply, as she glanced round her once valued parlour. All the furniture was marked, or *lotted,* as it is termed; the carpet loose from the floor; and the more portable articles of small dimensions, parcelled out, and placed on a side table.

"Very true, sister," replied she, sadly; "but I fear there is no alternative. I have nowhere else to be for the present. There is no one to

whom I should like to apply, and I had better just be as I am until all is over. Mr. Harris, the broker, says he can let us have *one* room; so I'll clear all the things out of Alice's little study, and lock the door, and we can stay there until all the bustle is over."

"*We!* If you mean to include me, *I* have arranged so as not to be in your way. I wrote on Monday to Mrs. Marshall, and she has answered my letter this morning, saying, that she is perfectly happy to receive me again. So, with your will, I set off for Chelmsford to-morrow morning, as I have already taken my place in the coach."

"Very well, Rachel; I can only hope you will be happy. I fear I have not been able to make you always as comfortable as I could have wished; but you must now take the will for the deed, for, believe me, I always intended you kindly."

"Doubtless, sister; and as we are about to part, I am willing to believe it. I don't wish to recur to old grievances. Every one does as well as they can, and nobody can be perfect, and doubtless I have been sometimes considered in the way; but now that I have rid you of my company, I can only hope you will get on better without me."

Mrs. Russel made no reply. She felt the

full force of this ill-natured speech, but her spirits were too depressed by other circumstances to feel able even to remonstrate. Alice felt truly indignant. She could have forgiven all the irritability or unkindness of Miss Vickery's past conduct, but her present proceeding, at such a time, filled her with disgust and contempt.

"Does Mrs. Marshall still live in her old house, at Chelmsford?" inquired Mrs. Russel.

"Yes; always the same, she never intends to leave it. The very furniture is unchanged; and its mistress seems to have shared a like exemption from any alteration. I do believe you would not know a bit of difference in her since you saw her last."

"And that's a long, long time ago. I have not seen Mrs. Marshall since her son's marriage, when we all went with our poor dear father. Do you remember, Rachel, how happy we were that fortnight we spent at her house?"

"Indeed I do; I can tell you, I have never been so happy since; and our father, poor man, if he were alive, might say the same. Mighty changes occurred very shortly after that, to put an end to all happiness for him or my poor mother either. Heigho! But it is no use to recal the past. I can only say, as I always do, it's a blessing to have nothing to reproach *oneself* about."

Mrs. Russel made no answer; for she well understood the covert meaning of that speech, which alluded to the never-forgotten subject of her marriage, an event which Mrs. Russel herself had never once regretted, but long since refrained from defending.

"After all, however, Mary," resumed Miss Vickery, in rather a softened tone, "I think it is a pity to dream of staying here to-morrow, at least. Is there no one of your acquaintances you could go to, during the confusion? I am sure anybody would make you welcome for a day, and you can see what's to be done afterwards."

"There is no one I would like to apply to; for I should be obliged to explain my circumstances; at least, I should consider myself called upon to do so, if I went to their house. Besides, there is no person I should like to ask a favour from."

"What! Surely Mr. Gardiner would be glad——"

"I have not mentioned any part of this business either to him or Emma. I called at their house last night; but Emma, you know, is at Croydon, and he was there also. He goes twice a week—and—and—I have not found time to go since; but, though I had, I should not have liked to apply to him. The bare mention of my

present circumstances would be like asking pecuniary aid, from so intimate a friend as Mr. Gardiner; and I am determined to suffer anything rather than do so."

"Ah! Well, well! Every one to his mind. I shan't try to advise you. I know by past experience that you'll take nobody's advice but your own; but, I should think, one would more naturally apply to *intimate* friends; for, if *they* do not assist them, who is to do it? I am sure, if it were in my power, I'd give you any assistance, I'd even have asked Mrs. Marshall to have accommodated you as well as myself; but I knew it would have been no use. She would have been certain to refuse; for she has never forgiven your undutiful marriage. She always agreed with my poor mother, who never *could* be reconciled to it, even to the day of her death; but, as I always say, it's no use talking about the past—My goodness! it's past eleven o'clock. I ought to have been in bed long ago; for I must be up early; for I must be at Holborn before eight o'clock, as the coach starts exactly then. By-the-bye, I may send Jane, I fancy, for a coach, when I go, as I have two great trunks, besides my chest of drawers, which the grocer promised to send a man to carry to the waggon."

"Certainly, Rachel; but it is likely both

Alice and I shall be up long before then, and you shall have everything comfortable;" and Mrs. Russel sighed and wiped away her tears as she spoke.

Miss Vickery had lighted her own candle, and was already at the door, when she returned and again advanced to her sister, extending her hand.

"Good night, Mary," said she, in a tone of some affection; "it grieves me to see you in misfortune; and, I assure you, I would assist you, if it were in my power."

"That I believe you would, Rachel," said her sister, as she quitted the room, and bursting into tears; "for, with all your faults of temper, I do not think you are hard-hearted."

Alice thought very differently, and she wondered at Mrs. Russel's feeling for one so utterly selfish and cruel as she regarded her aunt to be. The warm enthusiasm of youth regards no consequences that can check the violence of affection. But Miss Vickery was not wholly to blame; she spoke truly when she said she would have assisted her sister, if it had been in her power; but, as it was, she could only have added to her misfortunes by remaining near her. In reason, therefore, she acted rightly; but, perhaps, not in affection.

Next morning came. A hasty breakfast and

as hasty a farewell was all that preceded the departure of Miss Vickery. Parting is never a pleasant time, and even Alice wept as she kissed, perhaps for the last time, her hitherto ill-natured and irksome companion. But there were many other things to think of, and much to require her active bodily exertions; therefore, she had little time to indulge in any feeling. Long before the hour of sale, as had been also during the preceding day, a number of visitors and officials were busied passing through and out and in of the house. Alice and her mother had spent the whole of the previous night in arranging all that yet remained of their own property. This consisted only of their own wearing apparel, which, having been emptied out of what formerly contained it, was all packed together in one large trunk (purchased for the purpose), and placed in the little room which had formerly been the seat of Alice's happiest hours, and now, cleared of every article of furniture, was granted to them, per favour, as the only private room they could be permitted to occupy. Many were the sad regretful recollections which all this might have occasioned in the mind of Alice; but she had little time to regret; all was bustle, noise, and uproar; and she was glad to escape to the only retreat left her, and bless herself that it still remained.

This martyrdom was unnecessary, it is true; but such was Mrs. Russel's determination to ask no assistance, that she cheerfully seated herself on the trunk, which contained all she could claim in the world, and, locking the only door she could now shut against the public, resolved to wait till all was over rather than let her situation be known to any human being, who might possibly infer that she claimed their aid. Perhaps it was just as well; for it is very unlikely that she would have found many willing to have granted her petition.

It would be impossible to describe the feelings which occupied the minds of Mrs. Russel and Alice during the space of four hours. While the business of the sale was carrying on without, they remained shut up in perfect inaction of body; but the anxiety and intense occupation of mind left but little room for ennui. Under any other circumstances, to be shut up for four hours would have been a most fearful infliction; but, as it was, any situation was the same as another. Conversation was impossible; books equally so: for neither could have been enjoyed. When every idea is absorbed in one harassing subject, it is difficult to say how time passes; but it often passes quicker than in pleasure.

The auction was up stairs in the drawing-room, and where they sat they could distinctly

hear the naming of each article as it was offered for sale; and it can be easier conceived than described the bitterness of feeling with which they listened to the sale and purchase of many of their most valued and carefully kept articles of furniture, endeared by many circumstances independent of its intrinsic value. Even inanimate things become associated with our feelings by long habit.

Mrs. Russel of late had never been affluent. Even at the period of first furnishing her present house, she had always the fear of the future, and the anxious desire of economy in her mind. During the course of years she had gradually obtained many little luxuries, or rather vanities, which, as they had always cost her trouble and pains in the purchase, were enhanced in value to her; and there was scarcely an *extra* article in her whole house that was not associated with a little era of pleasure, at the time of purchase and possession, which rendered it more painful to lose.

Four o'clock struck. The sale was likely to be over about five, and therefore it was now time to think of how they were to proceed. Mrs. Russel had already obtained the consent of her landlord to remain in the house until such time as the whole of the things were cleared away; and she resolved to do so, as much depended on

the fair disposal of her property; the whole amount would, in all probability, be required to pay her debts. Alice was much averse to this plan; for, besides being doubtful of any good occurring from it, she was much afraid that the mind of her mother was unequal to her self-inflicted exertions. Mrs. Russel was far from a strong-minded woman, and her health seemed already sinking beneath this unexpected misfortune. Her hopes, hitherto sanguine, were irrevocably sunk; and incapable of thought or exertion, she could only reply to Alice's repeated proposals and advice by her tears. Alice saw that it was all in vain to look for advice from her; and with an anxious and fearful heart, she looked forward to act for herself. But how? She was alone and friendless, utterly powerless; she knew that the full extent of their funds did not exceed a few pounds. These, however, would suffice to pay for a temporary lodging, and she could lay her plans at leisure.

At this moment she thought she heard the sound of a familiar voice in the room without. Her senses were confused by a long continuation of uproar, and she at first did not venture to credit her hearing. Few persons had entered the adjoining room during the day, because it was cleared of almost all the furniture, but still it might be some stranger. She listened for a

moment. Mrs. Russel started from a reverie. "Hark! Alice," exclaimed she, in a hurried whisper, "surely I know that voice." A quick low tap at the door followed. Alice started up, but she hesitated to open it. The signal was again repeated. She unlocked the door, and beheld Mr. Gardiner. Under the present circumstances, our unfortunate companions would almost have rejoiced to behold the face of their bitterest enemy; but that of a friend seemed to appear like a beam of sunshine on their solitary despair. Mr. Gardiner was a man of few words; but he grasped the hand of each with a pressure of emotion, and entering, closed the door before he spoke.

"Is this kind? Is this friendly, Mrs. Russel?" were his first words.

Mrs. Russel sunk on her seat, and burst into tears.

"I should never have known of this, had I not passed the house by mere accident."

"Alice," said he, turning abruptly from her, "I should have thought you might at least have let me know; but, no matter, all is now pretty well over; and you'd better get your mother out of this infernally close room as fast as possible. It will not be long before all the people will be gone, and you will get the house to yourselves. I have not a moment's time to spare, or I would

wait with you; but my advice to you is to take care nothing is stolen from the premises. That's all you need to look after now. Emma will be in town this evening, and she shall be with you; but for the present, good bye." And again shaking hands with Alice, he quitted the room, without saying another word.

Mr. Gardiner's manners were usually abrupt, but rather more so than usual, and at the present time Alice felt he might have said more. And he was gone; might he not have spared a few minutes to advise, if not to offer consolation? He was passing the house by mere accident; then wherefore come in at all, if he had nothing else to say? Mrs. Russel, whose feelings were excited too much by his appearance, wept bitterly, but made no remark.

The bustle and confusion overhead had ceased, and the sound of rapidly departing steps announced that the sale was over; but Alice was fearful of encountering any stranger, therefore she again retreated into the room, and closed the door. A very short time elapsed, when another knock craved admission. She opened it, it was the auctioneer; this man had behaved during the whole course of the business with the utmost insolence and assumption. He was a creature of Sharpquill's; and Alice had not the slightest doubt he had received his instructions from that

quarter. To her surprise, however, he presented himself with a total change of demeanour, as with a sycophantic smirk, and a low bow, he entered the room.

"Beg ten thousand pardons, miss,—don't disturb yourself, madam. I merely intruded with the commands of Mr. Gardiner, who desires me to inform you *officially* of what he has, doubtless, informed you already; that he has become the purchaser of all the articles in the house, for your benefit, and, therefore, ladies, I have the honour to inform you, that the house and furniture are yours; here is a note to that effect, which Mr. Gardiner desired me to present you with."

Alice was stunned; she could scarcely trust the evidence of her own senses, and her eyes were fixed for some time on the paper (which was put in her hand) before she could read or distinguish the following words:—

"I have purchased the household furniture and fixtures of 13, Caroline-street, Bedford-square, for the use and behoof of the former proprietor, Mrs. Russel; and I hereby tender the purchase to her as a free gift.

"JOHN GARDINER.

"*August* 1*st*."

Sudden joy and sudden grief produce nearly the same emotions; and the bitterest misfortunes could not have caused Alice to weep more passionately, than this unexpected elevation from the depth of affliction to perfect happiness.

But we shall not attempt to describe her feelings; those who have sympathised in her misfortunes, can alone conceive the joy of this sudden deliverance.

Had Alice been in a mood for philosophising, she might have moralised much on the nature of human beings, as it was amply displayed in the sudden and marked change of those menials of the law, who but a short time before had assumed every species of insolence and petty tyranny, which the extent of their "brief authority" permitted them to exercise towards one, whom they deemed friendless, and in their power. The sudden change of circumstances commanded as sudden a change from insolence to the meanest servile sycophancy; but Alice valued neither their good nor their ill; wearied and worn out as she was, she felt little disposed to reflect on anything; and, when at length the house was fairly cleared of its unpleasant intruders, she felt more ready to fall on her knees and return thanks to Heaven for her deliverance, than to reflect on aught that had passed, or was to come.

For a while we must leave her until a future period; when we hope again to introduce her to our readers, under circumstances of less confusion, and feelings more easy to describe.

CHAPTER IX.

HAVING occupied our pages for a considerable time with the domestic circumstances of Alice, we may return to our hero, whom we last took leave of on his outset for France. As it would be equally unnecessary and uninteresting to trouble our reader with the preliminary steps, we shall pass over all that occurred since we left him, until we introduce him at an inn at Dover, where we find him seated in a comfortable parlour—as comfortable as inn parlours usually are, and resigned to his fate; namely, that of remaining where he was until the following morning, when the steam-packet was to start for Calais.

Walter had just finished a late and solitary dinner; and feeling little disposed to awaken painful reflections by indulging in reveries of the past, as young gentlemen are usually said to do on their first journeys, he strove rather to divert his thoughts from all vainly indulged recollections.

Just before he quitted London he had received a letter, at the superscription of which, though

directed to himself, he had only hastily glanced; but now, as he took it from his great-coat pocket, where he had put it without even opening it, he recognised the hand-writing. It was from Mr. Simkin, and breaking the seal, he read as follows:—

"Dear Deverell,

"We are all heartily sorry that you are going. I am more sorry that I wasn't at home when you called, yesterday morning, to bid us good bye; therefore, I write this to make amends.

"I wish you well of your journey; although, for my part, I can't see much good you'll get by visiting a land of frog-eating coxcombs, and the sooner you're back to old England the better, say I; but every man to his mind.

"By-the-bye, we were in a fine mess at last (as I prophesied always) with that dirty disreputable vagabond—the Mam'sell, as she was called; she turned out a pretty piece of goods—a vile hussy, and no better than she should be. But she's packed off about her business, and I'm hearty glad of it; for if she hadn't exposed herself, by her own scandalous behaviour, God knows how long she might have been harboured in my house. No matter, I've routed out *her*, and I'll take precious good care no other dirty, foreign

trinket shall darken my doors, as long as my name is Humphrey Simkin.

"Mrs. Simkin, and girls, desire their kind remembrances and good wishes for the success of your journey. I needn't add mine; for to tell you the truth, though I wish you well, I must confess I'd have been better pleased if you hadn't been so successful as you are; for, as I've no son of my own, I have a fancy I should have liked to have adopted you: but no use fretting, perhaps, after all, things are just as well as they are; and, I'm sure, past experience might have taught me, that *them adoption* schemes don't always answer. I've got vastly little thanks from them I've done most for, before now; but no disparagement to you, for I shall always consider you with kindness, and heartily wish the time may yet come, when it may be in my power to do you a good turn.

"I wish I could give you any letters of *introducing*, as they are called, as you say you don't know any one at France; but that an't in my power, although, I believe, I have a very near relation, at present, living at Paris, where you are going; but, in the first place, I don't know his address; and, in the second, though I did, I'd be very sorry to make you acquainted with such a worthless good-for-nothing scamp; though it's my own nephew, and sister's son, that I'm

calling so; but that's no use talking about, I hope you are too good to heed any example, and again wishing you all success,

"I remain, always your friend, and well-wisher,

"HUMPHREY SIMKIN.

"PS. As I am going out for my morning's walk, I leave Rose to seal and direct this. She affects to be cross, because I bid her send her love—write to us soon. H. S."

It was with no slight feeling of satisfaction that Walter perused this homely, but well-meant, proof of friendship; but as he folded up the envelope, which contained it, his eye caught a few scarcely legible lines, traced near the margin with a pencil, and, holding it near the candle, he read, with some difficulty, as follows:—

"To Mr. Deverell,

"Sir, the interest which prompts me, could alone justify the freedom I take in thus addressing you; yet I fear I cannot explain myself. My father's letter, I find, informs you, we have a relation at Paris; the nearness of that relationship alone can justify my feelings. He who is mentioned by my father with harshness, alas! perhaps too well merited, has been from infancy as a brother to us—an orphan, and

friendless; he had no protector but my dear father—no home but ours, and we regarded him as our brother. He is gone from us—perhaps the command was just, but it was severe, that forbade him ever again to cross the threshold of that house which had been his only home. He has erred; but I would fain believe that there is that goodness in his heart which will retrieve past transgressions. When I heard you were going to Paris, I wished to ask you to endeavour if possible to discover where he resided; or, if still there, what was his fate. It is for that purpose I write this, although reluctant to impose a task on one whom I have no claim on. Yet, if it were in your power, it would bestow a lasting obligation on us. I can give you no clue by which I could direct your inquiries. I am ignorant of all that concerns his situation. When he left us, I believe he intended to follow the study of surgery, in which case it is probable you may meet with him. If so, you will not fail to recognise him by the name of Charles Travers, a name of which I know he was too proud to relinquish or deny. Should you meet with him, we much wish you could give us any intelligence of him, whatever be his fate or situation—conceal nothing I implore you, as anything is preferable to suspense—all I can add is the lasting gratitude of ROSE SIMKIN.

"PS. As some unpleasant feeling still exists, it would be as well to direct the first information to *me*."

The contents of this epistle, if such it may be called, excited a good deal of interest in the mind of our hero—a confidential communication from one so fair, could not fail to do so. It was evident, by the scarce legible writing, and frequent breaks in the page, from erasures and hesitation, that the mind of the fair writer had been anything but calm during the framing of her story. It was evident, too, to Walter, that although the pronoun *we* held the prominent place, that *I* was the only interested person; and although Charles Travers had been regarded as a brother by all the rest, that in the heart of poor Rose he had occupied a warmer place. Perhaps Walter blushed when he recalled his own vain self-deception on a very recent occasion; but as blushing is not a manly grace, we shall hope he forgot that, in his zeal and anxiety to serve the lovely claimant for his assistance. Be that as it may, he resolved to leave no means untried to discover the said Travers, if he still lived or ever had lived in Paris; and if he should succeed, he equally resolved to direct his information to Rose herself; for, although expressed in a post-script, he guessed the last was not the least wish of her heart.

The occupation of Travers rendered it very probable that he might meet with him; and, at all events, he was no ways displeased at the task imposed on him, as it gave him a motive to pursue; for, notwithstanding all due zeal in the pursuit of his professional studies, he feared that a good deal of his time would hang heavy on his hands.

In the absence of the one we love, every young man will allow that the time passes more slowly than in her presence; but, perhaps, some romantic lovers may think that the remembrance of past happiness, and the ever-present image of the beloved one, would amply supply the place of all minor considerations, or other amusements. Walter was either not sufficiently devoted, though perhaps none loved more sincerely, or at least none fancied they loved more fondly than he did; or his mind was not so romantically constituted. For the first ten miles or so in the coach, it is true, he thought of little but Alice; and perhaps during all the journey his mind was more or less at home. But, by degrees, as the pain of parting wore away, other objects became interesting; and as other sensations excited his attention, the train of thought was broken. New ideas passed in rapid succession through his ever active mind; and her image,

though never wholly effaced from his heart, was only at times present to his thoughts.

The train of his ideas was interrupted by the entrance of the waiter, who had attended him at dinner; and who, probably thinking he had been afforded long enough time in solitude, now appeared to inquire if he wished for tea. Walter had no wish either for or against, but gave a passive consent, as the best means of getting rid of further importunity; at the same time requesting that a bed-room might be got ready as soon as possible.

"Certainly, certainly, sir; but, I am sorry, very sorry—I am afeard it is not in our power to make all things as comfortable as we wish. The house is so very full at present, that we haven't as much room hardly as lodge a cat; and the bed-rooms, in particklar, are all occupied, from the ground-floor to the attic. The very parlour, sir—there's two gentlemen from Calais, obliged to sleep heads and heels on the sofa, sir, and in No. 16, there's six double-beds."

"Indeed! and I suppose I may infer from that, that I cannot have a bed at all?" replied Walter, somewhat irritated at this information, especially as it was now too late to proceed in search of another lodging.

"Why, sir, not so bad as that exactly, sir,"

replied the waiter, with a provoking grin ; "but only, sir, I am afraid you won't be so well accommodated as you might have been in a less crowded time. Yet, I'm sure, there an't an inn in all Dover, I'll venture to swear, can offer such accommodation as ours. There's the Nag's Head and Horns, to be sure; it mayn't be so full of company as ours, but then the *sort* of company is such as no young gentleman would prefer, even to a little inconvenience in a house where he can feel assured he is among first-rate society, as ours has always been famous for. Why, there's——"

"I wish," interrupted Walter, hastily, "you could tell me at once, what sort of sleeping room I *can* possibly expect, for I have little notion of remaining out of bed for a whole night."

"Well then, sir, I am sorry to say, it's quite unpossible for to give you any room, except you don't object to sleep double. And if you don't, you can have half of a gentleman's bed, who was so kind as say he had no objections. And I dare say won't be so uncomfortable neither, as it's a small room, and there's only another bed in it, and that's occupied by a very quiet, sober, steady old gentleman, who has lived here some weeks. But if you *do* object

to that arrangement, why there's the top back-attic, a wery small room to be sure, but wery comfortable withal, as I may safely assure you from experience, for Betsy, the head chamber-maid, has slept in it ever since she came to the place, and it must be a wery warm room."

"Oh, then I'll have that by all means," interrupted Walter; "that's to say," added he, laughing, "if Betsy be agreeable; but I don't wish to be so ungallant as displace her."

"Oh, not a bit—not the least bit in the world; very happy—very happy, indeed, that you are so obliging as put up with such poor accommodation. Betsy is quite willing to have a shake-down in the kitchen for one night; and it's to be hoped you will have a better room to-morrow, as a great number of our company are sure to set off with the early steam-packet to-morrow morning, for Calais."

"But as I am sure to accompany them, I shall not need a bed, except for to-night, and, as it is getting late, I should feel obliged by your allowing me to get it as soon as possible."

"Certainly, sir; certainly. I'll go this very moment, and give orders to Betty to prepare all things. Excuse the tea for a few minutes, sir, as the kettle an't a-boil. Do you wish toast, sir?"

Walter replied in the negative; and the talk-

ative waiter bustled out of the room, with the unpleasant assurance that he would be back presently with the tea.

Scarcely had he quitted the room, when Walter heard the sound of his voice, elevated to so high a key as to render the words perfectly audible, though the sound proceeded from the kitchen, which was separated by a flight of stairs from the room where our hero sat.

"I tell you there's no room for you, so get off about your business. It's quite unpossible for you to be here, so don't expect it. We've no room to accommodate respectable people, far less the likes of you, who, I dare say, hasn't got sixpence in your pocket to pay for a bed, if one was such a fool as give it you."

A momentary pause ensued, as if to give time for another person to speak, but the voice was too low to reach Walter's ears. And again the voice of the waiter resumed, in a still louder strain :

"Don't talk to me about the storm; I've no pity for you, or the likes of you, on a warm summer's night. If it was winter, I might offer you a bed in the stable; but as it is, it will do you good to tramp elsewhere. No doubt you'll find plenty of folks willing to take you in, if you are willing to pay ; but I reckon you an't much given to that trick. Ha, ha, ha ! So off with

you, my smart chap; and if you're so wery frightened for getting your fine clothes wet, better see if you can't put off some of 'em to gain you a night's lodgin'."

This witty speech was followed by a general burst of laughter from the assemblage of the kitchen; and when that had subsided, the sound of a person crying was distinctly audible.

"Come, come, don't give us none of that nonsense," resumed the stentorian voice of the waiter; "I'm too old a one to be caught by that; so make up your mind to do as you're bid—that's to take yourself off—before I come down stairs again. I'm going up just now, but mind, if I find you here when I come down again, I'll take the liberty of helping you out of doors in a way you won't perhaps much relish. So mind what I say, for I assure you I'll be as good as my word."

And instantly after, the sound of the ascending footsteps announced the approach of the speaker to the room where Walter sat. All was silent below stairs, therefore the sobs of some one in distress became more distinctly audible.

The door now opened, and in bustled the waiter, with an increased degree of importance, bearing a tea-tray in his hand, which, shutting the door with his foot as he entered, he pro-

ceeded to place and arrange on the table before our hero.

From the first moment, Walter had disliked the appearance and manners of this man, but now he viewed him with increased dislike, amounting to disgust, as, with a sycophantic smirk, he placed a footstool, which lay under the table, at Walter's feet, and remarked, in a whining tone, that "it was a terrible storm, and it was lucky for those who were under cover in such a night."

The waiter was a little, thickset, red-haired man, with a very snub nose, and a sinister cast in one of his eyes. Walter thought he looked the beau-ideal of a toad-eater.

"Yes, lucky, certainly," replied he, in a tone of contempt. "It is by no means a night to depend on the charitable feelings of our fellow-creatures, if I may judge from the example that just now reached my ears. Am I mistaken, or did I hear a person below soliciting for a night's lodging, which was refused?"

The face of the waiter became as scarlet as his short snub nose, at this unexpected detection, and he stammered, as he replied,

"Why, sir, indeed it's of no consequence, as the whole matter is not worth talking about; but since you ask, I'll tell you. It is only a slip of a lad, who looks vastly like a young

pickpocket, who arrived here last night, and, after having slept all night in a good bed, and staid all the next day, turns out to have no money to pay his reckoning; therefore it isn't to be wondered at Missus an't willing to keep him another night, as he has owned not to have a farthing in the world, nor no friends that he can apply to."

"Most certainly, a very just and sufficient reason for not keeping him; but I hardly think this is a night to turn even a friendless person out of doors," replied Walter, and at the same time walking to the window, he lifted the curtain, and looked out. The night was even worse than he had imagined. It poured in torrents of rain; and the thunder and lightning raged with that terrible war of elements, which often renders the warm season of summer more awful than winter's biting frost.

"It *is* a terrible night! I hardly think you would like to be turned out yourself," said he; "at least I should not; therefore, with your leave, I am willing to pay for this individual, whoever he may be; so you may afford him shelter for this night without any detriment to yourself."

"Very well, sir," replied the waiter, sulkily; "that's as you please, of course; and I've got nothing to do with the matter, no more than, as

I being the head waiter, my mistress orders me always to act in them matters; and it an't my duty, as you must be aware, to allow my mistress to be swindled. *I* don't think very much of the lad for my part, though you, sir, of course are the best judge; but since you intend so, I must tell you, sir, we haven't no accommodation but what I told you of before; not so much, in fact, for I hardly think the gentleman I mentioned would be willing to let the likes of him into *his* room. Therefore, since you wish the chap to have a bed, I am afraid there an't one, bating your own, sir, to offer him."

There was an air and tone of impertinent familiarity about the man that provoked Walter beyond all sufferance, and he abruptly replied, "All that's nothing to you; I agree to pay you for his night's shelter under this roof. I am sorry I can do no more."

"Then mayhap, sir, you won't object to pay for a bit o'supper to him, since you are so charitable? for I must own, I think he's need of that, for he an't tasted a morsel since last night, no not since he comed; but has *sit* by the kitchen fire, leaning his head on his hand. A well-looking chap he is too, and if it warn't for the sensible answers he gives when he's spoken to, I'd think he was demented or melancholy

mad, he looks so sorrowful and woe-begone. His dress neither an't so bad as one might expect for a person who hadn't a farthing in his pocket, but on the contrary, genteelish like, though a little shabby. A civil enough lad, too, he is, only you know, sir, one can't be so charitable as one might wish to be, if one could afford it; but since you are so kind as say you'll pay for it, I shall be happy to give the poor fellow a bit of supper, as I'm sure he must be main hungry. I don't know that he'll care much to take it, for I don't think he much likes his quarters; I fancy he hasn't been used to a kitchen; or else it is, he don't relish the jokes the folks below play upon him. He takes little notice, though, and don't resent anything; but I can see it goes hard, sometimes."

Walter's heart was touched: his pity had been at first excited by the circumstance of a fellow-creature in distress, but now the further particulars awakened an interest in his mind. He felt a wish to see the object of his charity, and that wish was heightened by the idea that he might perhaps be of farther use to him. "You may tell the lad to come up stairs," said he to the waiter, who, having received no answer to his long volubility, was preparing to quit the room. "I wish to speak with him, and you may send up some supper also."

The waiter bowed, assented, and quitted the apartment.

The summons was not long in being obeyed; for a few minutes had scarcely elapsed when the door re-opened, and the little waiter ushered in the stranger, and with a modesty as unexpected as it was welcome instantly retired, and closed the door.

Walter instinctively rose as his guest entered, although there was little in the personal appearance of the stranger that commanded respect. He was a slightly-formed delicate-looking lad, apparently about fourteen or fifteen. A dejected melancholy was visible in his air and deportment; and as he advanced, with his hat in hand, he endeavoured to conceal his face from Walter, who at the first glance perceived the cause—his eyes were red and swollen with weeping.

Walter handed him a chair, which he took, and seated himself in silence, but in evident emotion. Walter forebore making any immediate remark, as he was fearful of increasing his confusion, arising probably from shame, agitation, and that feeling of humiliation for ever attendant on poverty. As he contemplated the garb and *tout ensemble* of his guest, the pity excited in his breast was increased rather than diminished. His clothes were threadbare and shabby; but they had been originally of finer texture and

superior fashion than would have been expected from his desolate situation. His countenance, as he sat leaning his head on his hand, half-shading his features, appeared to Walter uncommonly prepossessing, and a profusion of dark hair, which rested on his brow, rendered more conspicuous a paleness almost death-like. Tears, which he vainly endeavoured to suppress or conceal, trickled from his downcast eyes, and escaped between the fingers of a hand, which, though not perhaps the perfect model of fine sculpture, bore no marks of toil.

"What a stormy night!" remarked Walter, anxious to break the ice of silence, with some subject foreign from what seemed to distress the mind of his companion. The rain which beat with violence, and a tremendous peal of thunder at the same moment, bore witness to the truth of the observation.

"Stormy, indeed!" replied the stranger, in a broken voice; "and Heaven's blessing will surely descend on those whose mercy has afforded shelter to a friendless wretch on a night like this."

"We have all of us but little mercy in our power," replied Walter, smiling; "but," added he, in a cheerful tone, "I think the only reciprocity of charity, on such a night, is to try and amuse each other, as well as is in our

power. I wish," said he, laughing, as he glanced at the empty stove, "I wish it were winter, when one would be willing to submit to the additional cold, for the comfort of a cheering blaze, during such a storm. But, come; you look weary, and I dare say have need of refreshment; tea is no great offer, but I have ordered supper, of which, I hope you will do me the favour to partake, and keep me company."

The stranger strove to reply: emotion checked his utterance, he covered his face with his hands, and burst into a flood of tears.

Walter was in no desponding mood, and though the grief of his companion did not fail to touch his heart, he saw that it was better to rally than attempt to soothe.

"Come, come," said he, assuming a jocular tone, at the same time rising and taking the stranger's hand in his; "I won't have you for a guest of mine if this is to be the way of it. I myself stand in need of some merry companion, who will rouse my spirits and not depress them; besides, tears are unmanly, and I will not give you any quarter for them." The stranger strove to laugh. It was a strong effort, but the effect was that of in a great measure restoring his composure.

"You are right," replied he, wiping hurriedly away his tears; "this is indeed unmanly, but

forgive me, I have suffered misfortune with fortitude; but this kindness to one who has been so long an outcast of the world is too much to bear unmoved."

Walter looked at him as he spoke, and for the first time observed he was dressed in mourning. This circumstance awoke a new chord of sympathy; perhaps the stranger had lost a friend, a father; if so, his sorrow must be too deep to be lightly dealt with.

"You mistake me," said Walter, again taking his hand, "if you think I would jest with you; but irretrievable misfortunes can only be embittered by regrets, and I fear sympathy, especially that of a stranger, could avail but little to solace any great affliction."

"Oh, yes, yes!" exclaimed the youth, grasping his hand with vehemence; "your sympathy is all I ask, all that *can* solace me; and is it wonderful," added he, calming his first violence of gesture and tone, "that I thus value the sympathy of the only person who has extended the hand of mercy towards me? I am a desolate, friendless being. In the whole vast and crowded world, there exists not one human being who cares whither I am cast, or what is my fate. But for you, I might have perished with hunger and cold; and such is the shrinking cowardice with which one clings to life, that, although

existence has been long a burden to me, I crouched before the insults of menials rather than boldly resign it. You have rescued me, and, though I have nothing to hope or cling to, I bless you for bidding me yet live."

"Nay; no more of this," said Walter gently, checking his emotion, "you are weary and must need refreshment. After you have supped and rested, you and I will talk over all, make better acquaintance, and settle our obligations to each other."

As he spoke, he pulled the bell; and on the appearance of the little waiter, ordered supper to be brought up instantly, a command which was speedily obeyed. Walter kindly enjoined silence, as he pressed his companion to partake of the meal which his faint and exhausted frame so much required. The stranger ate little, but seemed refreshed, although from time to time the unbidden tear started to his eyes; and, whenever his glance rested on Walter, his emotion seemed to increase, in spite of his efforts to suppress it. Walter felt himself insensibly but deeply interested in his new companion, and, by the time the table was cleared, though it was late, he consented with much readiness and curiosity to listen to the narrative of his guest, who proffered to relate it, which he did, pretty nearly in the following words:—

"The circumstances of my birth were such as often has called the blush of shame to my cheek. It was a long time before I knew my father, and my mother I wish I could forget. My first recollections of existence are associated with little but pain and humiliation. At my earliest dawnings of consciousness, I was the inmate of a parish workhouse, where hard fare, and too often harder blows, were dealt out to me, by that heartless class of commissioned tyrants who seem to triumph in the extent of misery which it is in their power to inflict. But cruel and harsh as these tyrants were, I gladly clung to their protection, in preference to sharing the wanderings and infamy of my unhappy mother. As my tale is brief, and perhaps of little interest, I need not make a mystery of her fate; suffice to say, she died while I was but a child. Her career ended, as it had ever been, in disgrace and shame. Perhaps you may despise me now, when you hear my origin. If so, I cannot blame you, for you are not the first who has done so. Few are generous or philosophical enough to overcome the prejudices which society for ever attaches to one born under circumstances like mine. I need not fatigue and pain you by the details of a series of daily inflictions, hardships, and oppression, which is the fate of the friendless and outcast orphan. As I advanced

in years, it was only to become more and more alive to the hopelessness of my situation. I was a being totally without knowledge, beyond the limited and every-day facts that had passed before my eyes, during a life of nine years in a workhouse in London; but nature had unfortunately gifted me with a mind peculiarly sensitive to my own misfortunes, and a disposition to habitual melancholy, which for ever brooded on the dark side of existence. It must be owned, there was little to impart cheerfulness. Perhaps, too, the nature of my disposition proceeded from a physical cause. I was of a weak constitution, a feeble frame, and suffered severely every disease that embitters the age of childhood. Had I been strong and healthy, I might have vegetated like many others in similar circumstances, who, content while the wants of nature are supplied, derive a passive pleasure in their mere animal existence. But, unable from bodily weakness to partake of the active employments, I was left with nothing to amuse or occupy my mind; that consequently had no resource but its own reflections, which surrounding circumstances rendered dark and gloomy. As I grew up, my frame was very little stronger, and still liable to the frequent attacks of severe illness; therefore, as no situation could be obtained for me, it was judged as well to keep me where I

was, until such time as my strength was sufficient to render me capable of gaining my own livelihood. This very circumstance, however, which was then regarded as my misfortune, proved by a chance to be the cause of good fortune to me. As I was not strong enough for manual labour, it was the custom for the matron of the workhouse, and others of the establishment, to send me on errands and messages to various parts of the metropolis. One bitter frosty morning after Christmas, I set off early to carry a parcel as far as Fleet Street, from Marylebone Workhouse, where I lived; the parcel was not very large, but contained articles of some considerable value, and therefore I received particular orders to be careful of it; which I was, as well as my half-frozen limbs, too thinly clad for the inclement season, and the slippery nature of the ground, would admit of. The morning was foggy and dark, and the ground thickly covered with snow, therefore I had some difficulty in maintaining my footing, which was rendered more precarious by the frequent jostling, pushing, and shoving, which I received in passing through the crowded streets, which were, owing to the period, more than usually thronged by the dissolute and idle. As I was turning the corner of one of the by-streets, which lead from St. Clements' Danes to the Strand, two men suddenly

ran against me with such violence as to dash me on the pavement. I was stunned by the fall, as my head struck on a large stone which lay on the pavement; but when I came to my senses, I found myself drenched in blood, which flowed fast from a severe cut in my temple; and, on looking round, I found my parcel was gone.

My horror and dismay at this discovery baffles all description. Even now I recollect it with almost a shudder. To imagine my feelings, it would require one who had been exactly in my situation. I do not believe, had I been menaced with the loss of life at that moment, that the dread could have been half as great, as was occasioned by the loss of this parcel; what were its contents I knew not, but they were of value to my tyrants, whom, I well knew, by hard experience, would not fail to visit unlimited vengeance on my head for its loss. I was no stranger to what it was in their power to inflict; and I writhed under anticipations sufficiently fearful to a child of nine years old.

At this moment an elderly gentlemanlike man passed by. He was looking in an opposite direction, and he proceeded to cross the narrow street, without observing me. I do not know what sudden courage impelled me. It must have been despair; but, springing forward, I caught hold

of his great-coat, and throwing myself on my knees, before him, exclaimed,

"Save me!—oh, for God's sake, save me!"

My frantic gestures, my face and clothes stained with blood, and the wild accents of my voice, at first startled the old gentleman, who retreated backward a few paces in evident astonishment. Then, suddenly recollecting himself, he raised me from the ground, addressing me in a voice which sounded sweeter than any which I had ever heard.

"Save thee, child! what ails thee? Thou art grievously hurt. What can I do for thee?"

"Oh! no, no—I am not hurt; but, oh save me—save me from *them!* They will kill me—I dare not go to them;" I exclaimed, embracing the knees of the stranger, and shrieking aloud in the impotence of my despair.

The old gentleman lifted me from the ground, and carefully examining my wound, endeavoured to stanch the blood with his handkerchief. I wept bitterly; but not from pain, for the excess of my mental anguish overcame all bodily sensations. I clung to my new friend with an instinctive feeling that I had met with a protector. I gladly submitted to him to lead me wherever he chose. I read in his countenance every benevolent feeling; but such were my own at that moment, I would have yielded to the commands

of any being, however fearful or repulsive, rather than have encountered the idea of returning to my tyrants.

My new protector conducted me to an apothecary's shop in the Strand, close by, where, under his directions, my wound was dressed, and a refreshing draught administered to me. This done, he withdrew, taking me with him, to a back-parlour, where, seated by a blazing fire, he made me relate the history of my misfortunes. Hitherto accustomed, as I had been, to the harsh treatment, and unfeeling conduct, of my task-masters, I looked up to this newly-found friend as a guardian angel sent from heaven for my protection; and, even now, when I recall to memory his venerable figure, and benign countenance, I do not wonder at the instinct which prompted me to throw myself on his mercy.

His dress, although I did not then know it, was that of a quaker, to which sect he belonged; and its unostentatious simplicity was a type of his meek and humble mind. He was far advanced in years, which might be seen by his bent form and silver locks; but no trace of wrinkles furrowed his placid brow. Never, never, can I forget his smile. It beamed on my despair, like a gleam of sunshine on the dungeon of a wretched captive.

He listened to the brief and simple narrative,

which I freely related of myself, and seemed to take a deep interest in my misfortunes. After I had finished my story, I again threw myself at his feet, and with eloquence which I had never before been master of, besought him to take mercy on my forlorn and desolate situation, and protect me from the fearful alternative of perishing with want, or else returning to the more terrible punishment which awaited me from my oppressors.

"Fear nothing, child," replied he, in a sweet tone. "I have determined to take thee with me to my dwelling, where thou shalt be safe, protected from hardships, in future."

I had no words to thank him. A child is better able to solicit mercy than to express gratitude. My feelings can be easily conceived, thus snatched from utter despair to happiness.

I was conducted by the old gentleman to his own house, a splendid mansion in the city, which I was told should henceforth be my home. I afterwards learned that my benefactor was a retired merchant; who, having amassed a large fortune in trade, devoted the latter end of his days to quiet studies, and the pursuit of benevolent actions.

He had no family. His wife and children all died before he had gained his wealth; and, as is too often the case, he did not obtain his fortune

until he had lost the power of enjoying it. Sorrow had saddened his mind; which, though pensive, was far from gloomy; but his heart was still open to the kind feelings of nature.

The interest he took in me, quickly increased to affection, till, by degrees, I became the dearest object of his cares. He had no relations, and few friends, therefore his attentions were undivided; and, from the first, he declared his resolution to educate me as his own child. Never did parent fulfil every duty with more strictness and affection. Under his tuition, I gained the knowledge of natural objects, and of literature, more rapidly than might have been expected, by reason of the reverential interest I observed in all his instructions. But let me not dwell on a period of my life, to which I fear my future prospects menace, that I must henceforth look back with regret.

My benefactor was not satisfied with present kindness, but took care to provide for the future, by making a will, in which he left me sole heir to his fortune, which would amply supply my whole life in profusion and independence.

Four years passed in happiness, but fate decreed that was not to continue.

A distant relation of my benefactor made his appearance from abroad; and, although the claim of kindred was so slight as to be hardly

recognisable, the good old man could not refuse to admit him to his friendship.

This person was a young man, but had been recently in trade, as a merchant, in Spain, where he had failed, and was come to London to endeavour to establish himself there. He solicited the assistance of my benefactor, who yielded in the goodness of his heart, and agreed, at his urgent entreaties, to embark a considerable part of his fortune in establishing him. For a time, affairs seemed to prosper. The business succeeded, and my friend was overpersuaded to acknowledge himself as a partner. This acknowledgment obtained, the ungrateful villain absconded, with all that was intrusted to him, leaving his benefactor to pay debts, to an amount, which swallowed up every farthing of his remaining property.

Plunged thus unexpectedly from affluence into the depth of poverty, my friend bore his misfortunes with comparative resignation; but he lamented them on my account, for whom he reproached himself with a bitterness of regret, which soon undermined his health, fast declining in age. It was in vain I strove to reason with him against the folly of vexing himself for me; who, as I represented to him, had no claim or right to expect anything from him, and for whom he had done more than enough in the first in-

stance. All was in vain. He never ceased to lament his folly; and, at times, his paroxysms amounted to a remorse almost frantic.

His creditors allowed him a small pittance, and his declining health demanding instant attention, he was advised by a medical friend to seek a change of air; and for that purpose he was allowed a small sum to go to France. I accompanied him, and last week we set of for Dover. On the very day of our arrival, my benefactor expired. Just before his death, he disclosed himself to be my father. From the particulars of my history, he had traced me to be his own child. He had resolved not to disclose the secret, as he had hoped to be able to make amends for his error. He died, bitterly lamenting it, and upbraiding himself for what he deemed Heaven's severe, though just, punishment for his transgression. He died, and I again found myself a beggar. The rest of my history is already known to you. Chance has again thrown me in the way of a merciful being. Without your aid, I must in all probability have perished for want. To you I owe my life; but to you I have no means of repaying the debt of gratitude. Alas! I must be compelled to crave a further extent of bounty, or again seek the mercy of a hard and unfeeling world, where few, very few, are to be met with who are willing to

extend their helping hand to raise a fellow-creature from destruction. You behold in me a friendless helpless being, but one who would gladly toil, if he knew how, to maintain an existence which he is too cowardly to quit. The world is wide; but to me it is a wilderness. Bodily strength I have but little of; but such as I have I will gladly proffer to earn a subsistence: mental acquirements I have not many; but these I would apply, if I knew how. To you I alone would cling for advice—no, no—for mercy. I would implore you not to cast me from you. I will serve you—love you—devote myself to you. I will gladly become your meanest dependant, if you will permit me to share your fate and obey your will. Cast me not from you; I am a weak and friendless wretch; the harsh rebuffs of the world I cannot brave alone. Let the humblest task be mine, if near one who is my friend. I ask nothing but bare subsistence, and that I will endeavour to repay by devotion and gratitude."

The stranger ceased to speak; for his voice became inarticulate with emotion; and, again covering his face with his hands, he burst into tears. Walter's heart was touched. There was little in the narrative; but the simple and unassuming manner of the narrator affected him; and, as he looked on him, he could not but sympathise in one so utterly destitute, one so outcast

on the world, with such little strength either of mind or body to encounter its hardships. What could be done for him? True generosity seldom asks that question; at least Walter did not.

The friendless stranger joyfully accepted his proffered protection. The lateness of the hour and the pre-occupation of every apartment in the inn afforded little accommodation; but Walter readily offered to share his room with him, an offer which the stranger steadily refused to accept, and, in spite of all entreaties, insisted on passing the night on the easy-chair by the side of the fire, which he declared was a far better place of repose than he had ever hoped to attain; and, as Walter felt no inclination either to share the apartment of the sober steady old gentleman, afore mentioned by the waiter, or to dislodge Betty the chambermaid from her top attic, he rang the bell, and, after having caused more coals to be brought, piled up a blazing fire, and, stretching his feet on the fender, leaning back on his chair, soon fell fast asleep, following the example of his companion, who sank into a profound slumber at the opposite side of the hearth.

CHAPTER X.

"Was there ever such obstinacy and such a foolish whim! Really, Alice, you quite provoke me beyond all patience. I appeal to papa. Hear what he says to it; for I am too angry to argue with you any more."

"A parcel of nonsense, truly," replied Mr. Gardiner, who had sat silent until appealed to as above, during a warm dispute between his daughter and Alice, concerning the intention of the latter of going to be a governess.

"Yes, a parcel of nonsense, truly; and I am rather of opinion Alice will find it so, if she is mad enough to attempt her project. I assure you, Alice, you are not fit for that trade: you are not enough of a sycophant. You would be no worse, in my opinion, of a little more self-will; but, little as you have, it would be too much for that. No, no; take my word for it, that wouldn't do at all."

"Besides, papa," resumed Emma, with much energy, "where is the use of it, when we are *so* anxious to have her with us? It is unkind—nay, it is absolutely unjust to act in such a man-

ner. I declare, it is enough to make the world think we have behaved unkindly to her."

"Nay, dear Emma," said Alice, smiling, as at the same time she embraced her affectionately, "I fear *the world* will not think anything about it; and those who know us must be too well aware of your kind warm heart to attribute any unkindness to you."

"Then why leave me, unless you have some cause of complaint against me? I tell you, Alice, I shall not believe that you love me, neither shall I believe that you are not offended with me, unless you give up altogether this foolish whim, and never think of it again."

"Do not ask me, my dear kind Emma, I have already told you that my reasons are good. I would explain them, only I think I had better not. Rest assured, they are not anywise connected with what you imagine."

"What then? Are we to believe it is all a dream of your own folly?" said Mr. Gardiner, somewhat more abruptly than was his usual manner.

Alice hesitated, smiled, and replied:—

"Why, yes, perhaps it is; for when persons are unwilling to give their reason for any action, they are liable to the accusation of having no reason to give."

"And are you content to submit to that accusation?"

"I fear I must, having no alternative."

"Except to be candid. Well, I believe that is no easy task to some people; but as it is, you are all the better fitted for your place than I thought you were, for it would not do for a governess to be candid; candour must always be avoided by those who would please those persons who consider themselves above them."

Alice coloured. She saw the satire, or rather plain meaning of this speech, but she hardly knew how to defend herself. A short pause ensued, during which Emma proceeded with her duties at the breakfast-table. Alice saw that Mr. Gardiner was much displeased, and although she knew the cause, reasons more powerful than even the dread of his displeasure forbade her to endeavour to remove that cause.

"Alice looks very serious," said Emma, as she handed her friend a cup of tea. "I dare say she is considering if she ought not to take our advice at last. Come, Alice, be a good girl, and say at once you will make up your mind to stay with us."

Alice shook her head, for she dared not trust her voice to reply.

"Alice is studying for her intended profes-

sion," said Mr. Gardiner. "A governess ought not, and dared not, speak the truth; at least, she must not tell what she thinks,—and Alice must needs practise in time."

"Nay, papa, you are too harsh, you ought to reason with her; that is not the way to prove that you wish her to stay with us, to speak in that unkind manner."

"How would you have me speak, child? Not surely what I do not think? Have I not said already that I wish Alice to stay with us? If I did not, I would not say so; and if she believes what I say, it is needless to repeat it. I am no hand at protestations, and it is too late to attempt them; so, once for all, I can only say, I wish it. If that won't do, then she must take her own way."

Emma looked at Alice,—she observed a tear on her cheek, and she was touched by it. She rose, and approaching her, threw her arms round Alice's neck.

"Dear, dear Alice, you hear what my father says. You know what he feels, promise to stay with us, and make me happy."

Alice burst into tears, and starting up, hurried out of the room. Emma would have followed, but Mr. Gardiner detained her.

"No, Emma," said he, "leave her to herself, there must be some motive she wishes to keep

secret; and in that case you can only harass her."

Alice had no direct motive, but a thousand minor reasons compelled her to appear thus invulnerable to kindness, and resolute in her determination. Perhaps it may be as well to explain all that has occurred since we last left her, up to the time of the foregoing conversation. After the unexpected deliverance from her misfortunes, Mrs. Russel found that all her affairs had been arranged by her benefactor, who was willing to discharge the debts which were the most pressing; but as Mrs. Russel knew that his power was limited, she resolutely refused to accept the extent of the bounty which his generosity wished to confer on her. Although the furniture was all purchased, she insisted on its being disposed of, and determined to give up the house, which she had not the means of keeping, unless at the expense of her friend.

It was in vain that Mr. Gardiner and Emma urged her to keep the house, for a time at least, until she should see if it were not possible to obtain a means of livelihood. Mrs. Russel was resolute for once; she had already incurred enough risk, and she was anxious to incur no more.

The furniture was therefore resold, though of course to the best advantage; and the money

appropriated to the payment of those debts which had been incurred during her residence there. As to the demand of Sharpquill, Mr. Gardiner took that wholly on himself; and most unlawyer-like, paid the whole amount in the first instance; but, lawyer-like, amused himself, by planning a scheme of prosecution for illegal conduct &c., which was never realised.

Although reckoned a very clever lawyer, Mr. Gardiner was the worst man in the world for his profession. None could settle a knotty point or decide a difficult case with more promptitude and talent, but none was worse at making out his own bills. No man was more quick at detecting dishonesty, and yet none was oftener cheated; and what was worse still, he cheated himself, or what was the same. In more than one instance, he had been known to gain a desperate case for a client who never paid him, and not only to forbear claiming his due, but actually to give money to the losing party, to enable him to pay the expenses, which would otherwise have ruined him,—generosity, scarcely credible in any man, but less so in a lawyer. Yet, strange to say, Mr. Gardiner made money. He had an immense business, and notwithstanding his indifference to self-interest, he became wealthy much faster than his more avaricious neighbours.

In private life, Mr. Gardiner was little known. He was anything but social. He had few acquaintances, but to such as he had he was a friend. He had few of those qualities which amuse, for an evening, the assembly, or the ball-room; but he possessed all those stern feelings of honour, and warm sympathies of friendship, that attach the heart for ever by the ties of gratitude.

No man was more negligent and remiss in the fulfilment of polite duties, but none more eager to attend to every claim of humanity. To have met Mr. Gardiner for an evening in a mixed company, the general opinion would have been, that he was abrupt, rude, and unsocial; to have known him for a week, it was impossible not to love and respect him. But to return to our story.

After having given up her house, Mrs. Russel consented to accept the invitation of Mr. and Miss Gardiner, who offered their house as her home. She was not quite resolved as to what were to be her proceedings, but she soon made up her mind.

As her annuity was now in her power, she resolved to live on it in future, without again risking any speculations; for although limited, it would be sufficient to supply her wants. Alice had informed her of the plan she had formed, of

endeavouring to obtain a situation as a governess; and although Mrs. Russel felt still as much pain at the idea of parting with her, she now saw too well the reason of such a step to attempt any further opposition.

Mr. Gardiner had done much for them. He was kind, noble-minded, and generous; but still they could not expect him to continue to support them; at least, they could not wish it. Every one would prefer independence. It would never, perhaps, be in their power to repay the bounty he had already conferred, but every good feeling forbade them to increase it.

Therefore, after much consultation with each other, Mrs. Russel and Alice agreed, that the former should go to reside, for the present, in France, where she had an acquaintance, with whom she could board cheaper, and be independent, while Alice determined to proceed instantly to gain her own subsistence.

This plan met with much opposition on the part of Emma, who wished her friend to remain with her. In the affectionate generosity of her disposition she never calculated on bestowing any favour, therefore she could not conceive the feeling which could hesitate to receive one. Thus arose many disputes, of which that related at the commencement of this chapter was one, of many which had occurred daily during the

space of three or four weeks which Alice and her mother had spent at Mr. Gardiner's. Among many reasons which made Alice the more resolute in her desire for independence, was one which she scarcely dared to acknowledge to herself, although it was the most powerful of all that impelled her. It arose from a conversation, which our readers may perhaps remember, that passed between her and Emma Gardiner, on a subject which deeply interested both—namely, Emma's confession of her love for Walter Deverell. Was Alice jealous of her friend? Alas, under circumstances like hers, such a term could scarcely be applied to her feelings!

Since the departure of Walter she had heard nothing from or concerning him. If he had ever loved her, it seemed now to be more than probable he had forgotten his attachment—wherefore, then, need she be jealous? Jealousy is a feeling of fear, lest another deprive us of what is our own. She possessed nothing, and therefore could not be robbed. Yet Alice felt too truly—too surely, that she loved Walter Deverell. She believed that Emma loved him also. Did he love Emma?—her heart sickened at the thought; and yet Emma was her dearest and only friend. Strange perversity of human nature! It would have given her far less pain to know that Walter loved one of whom she

knew nothing, than thus to suspect that he loved her friend. Under these feelings, could she continue to live on the bounty of that friend?—could she avow boldly to Emma that she loved Walter? No, no: every feeling of her nature shrank from the thought, especially now, since she had such reason to fear that she loved in vain. But even though it were otherwise, could she avow a truth which must either disclose her own ill-requited weakness, or blast the peace of her friend—perhaps both?

Emma was warm-hearted and affectionate; but in proportion as her affections were strong, her feelings were violent. Might not such a discovery change her present feelings to those of hatred, distrust, and enmity? The strongest tie of friendship is weak when opposed to love. At all events, Alice had not strength of mind to dare the trial. Mr. Gardiner had said too truly—"Candour is no easy task."

Under these circumstances, Alice anxiously wished to be dependent on herself alone. She felt that without perfect confidence in her friend, she could never be happy in her society, far less on her bounty; but it was a hard task to resist the eager and earnest arguments of that warm-hearted friend, and many a bitter tear and secret regret did the trial cost poor Alice. Emma Gardiner was a strange being. Her mind,

though well organised and talented, was differently constituted from the generality of her sex, but perhaps that difference arose from education. In the opinion of Mr. Gardiner, honesty was the first of all virtues, and that which above all others he strove to inculcate in his child—not honesty in its general acceptation, but that honesty of mind which candidly and openly avows every feeling, even though the avowal be against its self-interest. With feelings like these, she was at a loss how to conceive the motives which actuated Alice, as her own frank and fearless nature could form no idea of the fears and doubts which withheld a timid and shrinking spirit like Alice's. Alice was timid, but she was capable of firm resolution, and she needed all that she possessed in the present instance. But to proceed with our story.

The day previous to the conversation before related, Alice had sent a letter to the lady to whom our readers will remember she intended to apply, and in due time she received an answer much more agreeable to her wishes than she had ventured to expect.

The Hon. Mrs. Varley declared herself pleased at again meeting with Miss Russel. Her little girls were at present supplied with a teacher; but she was acquainted with a family who might suit Miss Russel's wishes equally, who were in

want of a governess; and if she (Miss Russel) would call on Mrs. Varley next Wednesday at two o'clock, and explain her terms, Mrs. Varley would be very glad to recommend her.

This was certainly more than Alice had even a right to expect: she was delighted beyond all measure. Wednesday was the day following. Alice had been engaged in assisting her mother, who was preparing for her departure, and seemed much pleased when Alice showed her the note. Emma was not pleased, but she was silent, for her father had almost commanded her to oppose Alice no longer. Therefore, when the appointed time arrived, Alice was allowed to set off for Mrs. Varley's without any opposition.

Mrs. Varley resided in Somerset-street, Portman-square, to which place Alice directed her steps. On knocking at the door, she was ushered by a footman, to whom she gave her card, into a handsomely furnished ante-room, where she found three or four other persons, all apparently waiting an audience of the lady of the house. A considerable time elapsed before the servant re-appeared; and when he did, much to Alice's satisfaction, although contrary to her expectations (she being the latest arrived), he addressed himself to her, desiring her to walk up stairs.

"I say, young man," said one of the persons in waiting, a respectable-looking individual,

seemingly a tradesman—"can you tell me if your missus knows how long I've been here, for it's gone two hours since I sent up my message, and I've been waiting ever since, you know?"

"I'm very sorry for you, Mr. Smith," replied the footman good-humouredly; "but I'm much afraid you must wait a good while longer—that's to say, if you want your answer, for my mistress is so busy. This is Wednesday morning, when she sees all her folks on business."

"But I was ordered to come, and on business too; and I've got other business elsewhere that I ought to be attending to," replied the man very angrily; "and once for all, I must either know if I'm to have my answer, or I must go without it."

"Well, well, don't be angry, my good friend —stay: I think I do know something about what my mistress wants with you. She was saying something about some black silk; but I'll ask, if you'll just wait until I show this lady up stairs."

"Be so good as say *I* am waiting," said a fashionably dressed female, who had been turning over the leaves of a finely bound annual, and giving herself all sorts of airs, during the whole time Alice had waited.—"Of course you know who *I* am?"

"And be so good as mention that *I* am here," said a poor-looking woman, who had sat patiently

supporting a heavy basket on her knee. "You won't likely know who *I* am; but I am the washerwoman that your lady told to call with the *specimen* of the linens, got up."

"And please say that I have waited three quarters of an hour, about that quarter of black velvet, as was ordered from Howel and James," said a pert-looking shop-boy.

"Have the goodness to walk up stairs, ma'am," said the footman, bowing to Alice; and opening the door, without making reply to any of the speakers.

"It is quite impossible that my mistress could have time to attend to one half of them people this morning," said he, as he led the way up the staircase; "and it is hardly possible to get rid of their demands; but my mistress will see you, ma'am, though it must be particular business you have come about, as she is very much engaged always on this morning. Step this way, please ma'am," pursued he, opening a door on the second landing-place, as, with a loud voice, he announced—

"The lady about the governess's place, ma'am." Not a little confused and embarrassed at this homely introduction, Alice advanced and found herself in an apartment, the interior of which and its contents baffle all description. On a large couch, or ottoman, in the middle of

the floor, was seated Mrs. Varley, robed in a dressing-gown, which was not conspicuous either for elegance or cleanliness; her hair in *papilliotes*, her feet in a pair of large yellow slippers, and her nose surmounted by a huge pair of spectacles, through which she was eagerly and earnestly examining the texture and quality of some Welsh flannel, which a man was unrolling and holding up for her inspection.

The tables and chairs, and even the floor, were strewed in all directions with articles of every size, nature, and description, that art or manufacture could produce.

In one corner of the room, a servant girl was busied in assisting a woman to lay and sort artificial flowers, which they deposited in small bandboxes; while, in another, a porter was engaged in packing a quantity of Dresden china, tumblers, chimney ornaments, and common earthenware. Two men, apparently tradesmen, were standing near the door, as if waiting for commands. One held in his hand a glass box, containing various articles of curious and rare workmanship; while the other man stood loaded with two brooms, a mop, and a large wooden slop-pail. A third man was engaged in assisting Mrs. Varley to inspect the flannel; on the merits and demerits of which she was discussing in a loud voice as Alice entered.

She merely looked up, and nodding, said, "You may sit down, child, I shall be at leisure to talk to you in a few minutes," and then resumed her discussion. Alice obeyed; and seating herself, awaited in patience the end of what, alas, seemed to be endless. Mrs. Varley was so deeply interested in her present occupation, that in a few moments she seemed to have totally forgotten the existence, far less the presence, of any one but herself and the flannel vendor, to whom she talked with loud and unceasing volubility. "Well, well; that may be all very true," replied she, to a remark of the man, "but you all tell these wonderful stories about your own goods; and you know it is not my business to mind what you say; I must trust only to my own senses; especially as I tell you I am not purchasing it for myself, but for a friend; and it is therefore my duty to take care that I don't purchase a bad article. Not that I would wish to be troublesome or particular, but I don't like the look of this flannel, exactly; I wished one a little more woolly, and the least bit in the world wider."

"There is no wider Welsh flannel made, ma'am," replied the shopkeeper; "and I am sure there is not any more woolly than this," added he, holding it up again for the fiftieth time towards the light.

"Ay, ay; so I know you all say; to believe your story, there is nothing so good as that precise article, whatever it may be, that you offer for sale; but you know it is quite necessary to take one's own opinion, as well as yours; and I say the flannel is not at all woolly enough for the purpose I want it. Stay; I'll appeal to this young lady," turning to Alice, whom she beckoned to approach. "Look here, child; what say you to this flannel? Do you think it is the sort you would purchase for *drawers?*"

Alice coloured, and could scarcely suppress her risible muscles at this plain question; but she replied as gravely as she could, "Really, madam, I am no judge."

"But you ought to learn, then; you are quite old enough; and the sooner one is able to judge of such things, the better. It is very necessary for a lady, I assure you, to be a good judge of all things; but no matter, I'll judge for myself, and I tell you, Mr. What's-your-name, I don't approve of this flannel at all. It is not the article, by any means, that I would purchase; so you may tell your master that I consider it very unhandsome of him to send such a very inferior article to *me*, and I intended to have purchased a large quantity, but unless he can let me have the proper sort, I shall go to another shop for it."

"But, perhaps, ma'am, you will be kind enough to say *what is* the sort you wish; I'm sure, ma'am, no shop could supply you better; and you know this is the *ninth* sort I have brought for your inspection."

"Well, well; you can bring one the least bit wider, and a great deal more woolly; and take care to let the list be red, as I told you, and not blue; I never buy *blue-listed* flannel; and tell Mr. Simpson to be sure not to fail in sending the half-quarter of black satin, as I promised to purchase it for a friend, and you shall receive the payment on delivery."

The man bowed a sullen assent, rolled up his flannel, and departed.

"Tiresome, unreasonable folks, these shop-folks are," said Mrs. Varley, turning again to Alice; "I declare one can never get what one wants from them, and they are so ill-tempered at the slightest trouble. I am sure no one is more easily pleased and suited than myself; and I declare I have always to send or go a dozen times to a shop for every article I want."

Alice smiled; for she thought this was no proof of her easy disposition. She was anxious to commence the subject of her own business; but Mrs. Varley was by far too deeply engaged in other matters to admit of that for a long time to come; she begged further patience on

Alice's part, while she proceeded to examine the articles of the two tradesmen in waiting, which she did with an equal proportion of volubility and busy importance as she had done in the case of the flannel. One of the men had brought, according to order, specimens of his rarest workmanship, namely, small but valuable trinkets, or rather ornaments, in carved ivory. These were all examined, and, of course, all found fault with; till having quite exhausted the man's patience and her own curiosity, Mrs. Varley ended by purchasing one little ivory pincushion, the smallest and cheapest article in his collection, for which she paid him a price little more than half of what he at first demanded. He was thus dismissed, apparently but ill-pleased. The knight of the mop and pail had next to undergo his examination. Mrs. Varley said she had undertaken to purchase both these articles, and one broom, for a friend who had commissioned her to do so. This bargain was rather sooner concluded; the articles were bought and paid for, with the exception of the mop, the man being ordered to bring another, with a *blue* leather thong to hang it up by, instead of a *red* one, to which Mrs. Varley objected.

"*Now*," said that lady, turning to Alice, "I think I have leisure to attend to you, as these

troublesome folks are done with—stay, James, you are sure that these china vases are properly packed; you recollect what I told you about not putting them inside each other. Very well. Now, I suppose you know where to take them? No. 4, Park Terrace, Regent's Park; and be sure you ask to see Mrs. Moxell herself, as I don't choose to trust parcels to the care of servants (they never pay proper attention to anything); and tell Mrs. Moxell, I shall call about the end of the week and let her know the prices. Now, mind; don't forget; and call down at Rundell and Bridges', in Ludgate-street, about that package that ought to have been sent to Sir John Jones's yesterday—I promised her ladyship to see after it. Now, make haste back, for I have an errand to send you to Brompton."

The porter lifted his package and departed.

"And you, mamoiselle," pursued the all busy lady, turning to the woman who was sorting the flowers, "I think these will do well now. You can call to-morrow about them, before they are sent off; but you can go home now—stay, let Jane show you up stairs to my room to look at those roses I told you about yesterday; they are a little soiled, but they cost a great deal at first; and I promised my friend to try if I could get any one to clean them; they would look just like new, with a little new

tinsel put round the stalks. I dare say you can dress them up for a trifle, just to oblige me. Show ma'mselle the roses, Jane."

Mam'selle and the servant girl then quitted the room; and at last Alice found herself alone with her busy companion. Mrs. Varley turned towards her, and, in a gracious tone, commenced the long-wished-for subject.

"Well, child, and so you are come about trying to get a situation as governess. Of course you received my letter. I told you to come to-day. I forgot I had so much to do; but no matter, I hope I have not quite tired your patience. So now, if you please, I am ready to talk about what you wish."

Although a little annoyed at the abrupt commencement of this speech, Alice was glad at its *direct* tendency; and readily, though with some confusion, proceeded to state her views and wishes on the subject which had brought her there. Mrs. Varley listened with much attention, nodding from time to time with apparent satisfaction, while she kept her eyes fixed on Alice, with a scrutinizing glance, as she spoke. After having explained all she thought necessary, Alice paused, and awaited the reply.

"Humph! ay, all very well," said the lady, settling her spectacles, and assuming a serious tone. "You wish for a *permanent* situation it

seems; that means, you wish to reside with the family. I did not understand that at first; I thought you only wished employment as a daily teacher, or what is sometimes called a *morning* governess. Now, I know a family who want *that*, but I don't exactly know any who would take a *resident* governess, just at present; but I dare say I may soon. Stay, let me think; I believe I do know a person—a lady of considerable rank—Lady Tudor. She is just going to part with her governess; but there is an immense family,—ten or eleven, I believe. Do you think you would be equal to take charge of so many?"

"I fear;—I should prefer few pupils. But then I am so very anxious to procure any kind of a situation,—that is, any, where I could be settled,—that I would gladly exert myself as much as is in my power."

"Well, well, we shall see. I have always these things in my way. All my acquaintances are sure to consult me about these matters; indeed, they cannot do without me. I have no doubt I shall be able to get you a situation, and one that you will like too. I have such a vast circle of friends, and every one of them consults me about their affairs, as you may see; for I am overwhelmed with business. I declare I have never a moment that I can call my own.

I often resolve to be disobliging, and to refuse all the commissions that my friends burden me with; but it is perfectly impossible; I must just submit. It is always the fate of one who has the misfortune to be thought skilful in many things. People always torment them for advice and assistance. But no matter, I'll see what I can do for you. I remember your being introduced to me; it was at Lady D——'s, I think. Ah, poor Lady D——! she was a very dear friend of mine. I grieved sadly at her death. She was a charming woman. She bought more Dresden china than any woman I ever knew. She always commissioned me to be her purchaser. She was a delightful woman. For her sake alone I shall do all in my power for you. Poor Lady D——! I remember she commissioned me to purchase a rare china pug dog for her. It was a very rare sort of china, and I had an immense deal of trouble in getting it. I spent five whole days in hunting for it everywhere. Poor Lady D——! she was a delightful woman. But, by-the-bye, you must write out a correct statement of all you can undertake to teach, and send or bring it to me to-morrow. I think I know a better situation than Lady Tudor's, and to-morrow I shall have time to think about it. Wednesday is always my busy day. I execute my commissions on that day,

and you see how I am harassed with business; but I will not forget you. I always am as good as my word."

Alice expressed her gratitude as she rose to depart.

"By-the-bye," said Mrs. Varley, detaining her, "could you do me a favour? Which is your way home? Through the whole of Oxford-street? Yes, that's your best way. Well, if you would just be so good as call in at Hayward's, the laceman, for me, and see if they can match this *insertion*. I only want half a yard, and I have been everywhere looking for it. It is for a friend, to whom I promised to *match* it. If you can—here is the pattern bit—I'll esteem it as the greatest favour. Now don't forget to send the written statement to-morrow; and rest assured you shall hear from me very soon. I have not the least doubt of being able to procure what you want. I'll write in a few days, at furthest. Southampton-buildings, number five? I shan't lose the address. I've a friend living in Southampton-buildings. I'll keep it in mind. Good morning, good morning. Don't forget the insertion. You can send it by the two-penny post, enclosed in the *statement*. Good morning."

With that, Mrs. Varley pulled the bell, and

Alice was ushered out with the same ceremony as she had entered.

Thus ended her first interview, but not her hopes of the future; for, notwithstanding the eccentric manners of Mrs. Varley, or the bit of *insertion* which she was commissioned to match, Alice saw in the apparent disposition of that lady, a wish to oblige, and a good will towards her. She was not mistaken. Under her present circumstances, she could not have applied to a better person than Mrs. Varley. This lady was one who made it the chief business of her life to attend to her neighbours' affairs,—not those affairs of importance which the majority of ladies attend to for the sake of amusement or gossip, but those matters of minor consequence, trivial, but necessary to every human being, more especially to the fair sex. In these matters, Mrs. Varley was ever ready and eager to offer her services. If any of her acquaintances wished to purchase a dress, an article of furniture, in short, anything useful or ornamental, that was portable, Mrs. Varley's advice and assistance were always at their service. Her whole time was employed in purveying for the wishes of others. By some of her acquaintance, it must be confessed, these services were rather thanklessly received; and a few ungrate-

ful individuals even went so far as to vote them a *bore;* but Mrs. Varley always met with a sufficient number of good-humoured, social persons, among her circle of acquaintance, to afford her employment enough to occupy her time. From the important purchase of a new drawing-room suit, to the matching of a yard of insertion lace, or a quarter of black velvet, Mrs. Varley was always willing to undertake the job, and seldom failed in procuring the commission, although we cannot pledge ourselves whether it was universally to the satisfaction of the commissioner. Some scandalous persons were so unjust as to allege that Mrs. Varley took her own profit in these purchases; but probably this calumny never reached her ears. At all events, it seemed to give her no trouble, neither did it damp her energy in her future enterprises.

Mrs. Varley was the widow of the younger brother of a nobleman, and by that connexion she was admitted into the higher classes of society, to whom she exerted herself in her manifold capacities, as before mentioned, and, in short, was regarded by most of her acquaintances as a sort of *general agent.* She was possessed of an ample income; but whether or not she added anything to it by her labours it would be impossible to state with certainty, and therefore unfair to suggest. She was now upwards of forty, and

the mother of two children, whose education she intrusted entirely to the care of a governess, having no time even to superintend their progress, although frequently employed in inspecting and procuring teachers for the children of other people. This latter circumstance, however, proved fortunate for Alice, as will be seen in the future pages of our narrative.

Just as Alice was quitting the shop, where she had most unexpectedly succeeded in matching the *insertion*, she suddenly recollected a circumstance which a little discomposed her; namely, that she had left the key of her writing-desk at home. This discovery not a little annoyed her; not that she suspected any one would even think it worthy of availing their curiosity; but she knew her mother, being busily engaged in arranging all the things, might probably open the desk, without any inquisitive motive, but merely for the sake of putting some article in it, or getting pens, ink, or paper, if she chanced to require them. This was the more likely, as it was only very lately that Alice had been in the habit of locking up anything. Formerly she had nothing that she cared to keep private; but now there were some things which she wished to remain secret from all but herself. Her heart beat quickly; and she hurried on as fast as possible. What if she were too late?—more than

probable. *All* then would be discovered—that secret, the existence of which she would have sacrificed anything to conceal. In her desk lay the precious leaf on which Walter had written the lines that first made her happy, the lines over which she now shed so many a bitter tear. Yet the discovery of that was of trivial importance when compared with her dread lest that *secret* should be known. Might not her mother, if she opened the desk, likewise open the private drawer? She knew the secret spring, and very possibly might open it; for it was there Alice kept her writing-paper. In that drawer lay the bank-bill for a thousand pounds. How that came there was unknown to any one but Alice, and its discovery would lead her into a maze of perplexities.

With a faint but anxious hope that she might not be too late to prevent this discovery, Alice quickened her steps, and reached Mr. Gardiner's with incredible expedition.

"Is mamma in?" inquired she at the servant who opened the door.

"No, miss; she has been out all the morning."

Alice could scarcely restrain an exclamation of delight.

"When did she go out?" she asked.

"Almost immediately after you, miss."

Alice felt relieved of an inexpressible burden.

It was very unlikely now that her mother had opened the desk, and there was no other person to do it. With her mind thus at ease, she felt no anxiety to search for the key which she had left somewhere in the bed-room where she slept; but proceeded to the drawing-room in quest of Emma, to whom she was anxious to relate her proceedings, and the account of her interview with Mrs. Varley.

Emma was not there, although the servant had said she was at work in the drawing-room. No matter! she was probably up stairs, and would be down in a few minutes; therefore Alice seated herself to wait her appearance. Some time elapsed; and at length, becoming impatient, Alice proceeded up stairs to her own room, for the purpose of taking off her walking-dress. On entering the bed-room, what was her astonishment! she beheld Emma seated at the table, the dreaded desk before her and open.

Alice sprang forward, with instinctive impulse, and snatched the paper from her hand, at the same time uttering an exclamation of surprise and reproach. Emma did not rise. She looked calmly in her face, and, to Alice's amazement, betrayed neither consternation nor guilt. The paper she had been reading contained *the lines written by Walter.*

"Alice," said she, in a mild but solemn tone,

"you see I offer no excuse for my conduct—I need not—I have none to offer—I am not ashamed of what I have done—I did not intend to conceal it—It is you who have acted dishonourably, not I; but I forgive you. Neither shall I claim any thanks for what I consider I merit them."

Alice stood in silent astonishment; and though Emma paused, as if expecting a reply, she was unable to give one. Emma proceeded—

"You see what I have done. You think it is dishonourable. I knew you would; but I, on the contrary, acted from a principle of the strictest honour. This was the only means by which I could ever have discovered a secret, which, if longer concealed, might have ruined the happiness of both. You would never have had resolution or fortitude to disclose it. Without acting as I have done, I never could have learnt the truth. It is you, then, who are to blame; and, if you could judge rightly for your own interest, you ought to be grateful for my having acted thus. That paper which you hold in your hand has convinced me of what I had but once suspected. Fearful as it is to find my suspicion confirmed, I prefer even certain misery to uncertain doubt. I would have questioned you; but I knew it would be useless. I do not accuse

you of falsehood; but I knew you would not be candid enough to tell me the truth. Accident favoured me. I entered this room with no such design; but, seeing the key of your desk lying before me, a thought struck me that it was possible the desk might contain some letter, or writing of some kind or other, which would either confirm or destroy my suspicions. You see I have been right. In either case I intended to have owned it to you; but accident renders even this confession unnecessary. We now stand on an equal footing: you can no longer act dishonourably by concealment, and I can no longer run the risk of injuring you from ignorance."

With these words Emma rose from her seat. Her cheek was deadly pale; but, save a slight quivering of her lip as she spoke, she betrayed no signs of emotion. Alice threw her arms round her.

"Stay, Emma!" exclaimed she; "stay! Forgive and hear! Forgive and pity me!"

Her voice here became inarticulate; and, sinking on her knees, she burst into tears. Emma raised her from the ground. She supported her to a chair, and, with silent but earnest solicitude, strove to wipe away her tears. She did not mingle her own with them: no, Emma did not weep. The anguish, the heart-

chilling despair, that she felt at that moment was too deep for tears. Alice saw that, and her own flowed more bitterly at the conviction.

"Emma," said she, in a broken voice, "Emma, do not hate me. Alas! it was for your sake alone that I hesitated to confess all to you. Forgive me. If I have erred, it was from a good motive——"

"Alice," interrupted Emma, in a tone the broken and hoarse accents of which made Alice tremble, "talk not of my forgiveness. I blame you for nothing, but for thinking me so vile, so hateful, as to be feared by you. Alice, had I thought as meanly of you, would I have confessed that *I* loved Walter Deverell? I, to whom he never gave cause even to—But away, away! Am I not a weak contemptible wretch? Have I not proved too well that I merit your distrust? Yes, yes; I confess I am. Did I not *volunteer* my confessions of love—love for one who despised me? Did I not dream, too, that *he* loved me? Vain, weak dreamer! too truly do I merit to be shunned and scorned. Oh, Alice! how deeply do I feel my own humiliation! How bitterly do I feel your just contempt! Talk not to me of pity. Oh! if that exists in your heart, extend it in mercy to a miserable wretch—miserable in every sense of the word, since she feels herself lost even in her own self-esteem."

Emma covered her face with her hands; she did not weep, but a deep convulsive sob shook her whole frame, and she trembled with violence as she leant for support on the shoulder of Alice. This unwonted emotion on the part of her friend had the effect of calming Alice.

"Listen to me," said she, endeavouring to raise the head of the almost insensible Emma, "listen to me, perhaps you are mistaken in the view you seem to take of this subject. Alas! you will, perhaps, find I have as little reason to triumph as yourself, although I have betrayed my weakness more; this paper, which you have read, contains no proof that *I* am beloved. Alas! the words, too lightly valued, seem to be soon forgotten!"

"Alice," replied Emma, suddenly raising herself up, as she spoke in a firm tone, "Alice, do not try to deceive me, I will not be deceived, I have now discovered the truth; do not strive to turn my mind aside from its stern and true reality. You love Walter Deverell; nay, turn not away, that changing cheek betrays you. You love him, and his own handwriting is proof that he has *professed* love to you—stay, do not interrupt me. I do not mean to vouch for the truth of his professions; far from it, I know he may forget them; disown and disavow them.

I grant the possibility that he, perhaps, never

intended to fulfil them; but that boots not as concerns *me*. Alice, I have owned that I loved him. Had I known what I know now, I might not have been so candid; but I need not now dissemble; you know I loved him; my own heart and Heaven only know how deeply, how fervently, and truly; but were he at this moment to proffer his hand and heart to me, I would reject and spurn him. I do not ask you to believe me; I know few would, and it is very unlikely I shall ever be put to the test; but Heaven and my own heart, that heart which felt and that Heaven which witnessed the fervency of my love, alone know the truth of what I now utter."

As Emma uttered these last words, she clasped her hands, and lifted them to heaven. Her eyes sparkled, and her cheeks glowed with a brilliancy almost superhuman. Alice gazed on her with a feeling of awe and veneration. Her impassioned aspect, the energy of her tone and manner, gave her the appearance of one inspired. Alice trembled before her, she felt as if she could have fallen on her knees, and almost worshipped her as a superior being.

The paper on which the lines were written had fallen on the floor, and the signature lay exposed to view. Emma's eye caught it! She turned pale, but instantly stooping she took it

up, and calmly folding it, put it in Alice's hand. "Here, keep it," said she; "and may the vows written there be fulfilled, or may he who pledged them, never live to blush for his broken faith. Give me your hand, Alice," added she, in a softened tone; "I would fain that we never had occasion to renew this subject, therefore I trust we understand each other. In future, it is for you to hope and trust in the happy fulfilment of his vows; and it is and shall be my task, to banish for ever the thoughts of a passion which reason and honour must henceforth condemn. Nay, offer no remonstrance, question your own secret wishes, and you will find they are exactly what I propose; therefore, be not hypocrite enough to offer any opposition. One favour alone I shall ask. Let what has passed between us this day, let all that relates to this subject, remain a secret to every one but ourselves. Promise me, Alice, and your word will be sufficient."

"I do promise," replied Alice, in a faltering voice, and, unable to command herself, she burst into tears. Emma clasped her in her arms. "Wherefore do you weep?" said she, in a softened and tender tone. "Alice, my dear Alice, my friend, wherefore these tears? Have *I* wounded thy too gentle heart? No, no, Alice, you know me too well to mistrust

my friendship. Ha! little simpleton, do you think I love you the less, because I find you are beloved by the one whom I *once* loved better than the whole world? No, no, I am not so weak, so envious. Come, let me dry those childish tears. Folly! let us talk and think no more of this silly subject. Pooh! I feel half inclined to make a jest of it already. No, no, Alice; I am but a weak foolish girl, but I am not so conceited as to be blind to my own defects, nor so envious as to quarrel with others simply because I find they surpass me. No, no, Walter loves you. I once dreamt he loved me. I was mistaken, but I have no right to complain, nor is he to be blamed. Who is there that will condemn his choice? Look up, Alice," continued Emma, assuming a playful tone, and pointing as she spoke to a large mirror which stood opposite to them. "See there, Alice, and ask yourself by the comparison, if you have any cause to fear *me* as a rival. None, my love. Wherefore then not love me as a friend? Yes, yes, we have ever been friends,—as friends let us continue. Henceforth, dear Alice, let the name of Walter Deverell never be mentioned between us, until such time as he proves his love for you; or till I have forgotten that I ever regarded him as aught but the husband of my friend."

Emma's voice failed as she concluded these

words. It was hoarse, and almost inarticulate with emotion, as she again repeated, "Promise that it shall be so." "I promise," replied Alice. Emma strained her to her bosom with a rapid but almost stifling pleasure; and, imprinting one kiss on her brow, hurried out of the apartment.

Alice remained for some minutes as it were rooted to the spot. All that had passed appeared to her bewildered senses like a dream; and it was not until her eye rested on the open desk, and scattered papers, that she awoke to the reality of what had occurred. She took up the sheet of paper on which were written the lines which had occasioned all; she gazed on it with fixed and tearful eyes; and, as she mentally questioned its contents, she asked herself—"Where was founded her triumph? on what ground could she claim the cause of hope superior to that of her friend, who had generously yielded all to her?"

For the first time she adverted to the title or superscription of the lines, "An Answer." What did that imply? was it not a proof of what was too truly the case, that *she* had been the first to betray her feelings? The blush of conscious shame, for the first time, rushed to her cheek, as she reflected on the rash and confiding weakness of her conduct. True she had not intended

the proof of her feelings to meet the eyes of him for whom they were cherished; but what then? accident had disclosed that proof to him. How then had she acted? Rash, unwomanlike, and unhesitating. Had she not sanctioned that avowal; nay, worse, had she not placed the written proof of her love in the hands of its object? It is true he had first declared a mutual sentiment; but how and under what form? —"An Answer!" Yes, yes, and these words still remained, as if in mockery, to remind her of her humiliation. What then had she to boast of? In what could she assert a prior claim to *his* affections? None beyond that of any other woman, who, bold or weak enough to unsex herself by declaring a passion for any man, could scarcely, for the honour of mere gallantry, receive less than "An Answer." Had she received more? No; true that "Answer" contained the language and even the vows of love; but how had these vows been observed? Had not this after conduct shown how little he valued them, or her to whom—in a moment of folly, or perhaps in mockery of *her* unwomanlike temerity—he had addressed them?

Thus, for the first time, did Alice regard the situation in which she stood; and bitterly did the full force of her own humiliation appear before her.

"Oh, Emma! my noble, my generous friend," she mentally exclaimed, "how I envy you! Like you I have loved; but, unlike you, my weak folly has betrayed that passion to contempt; and, unlike you, my coward heart refuses to resign it."

Alice judged too rightly of herself in this instance; deeply as she felt the sense of her own weakness, her heart was still equally prone to err from the same failing; and although she repented having disclosed her passion, still that passion ruled her soul, and would again have triumphed over her better reason. Let us hope, for the happiness of both, that she judged as rightly in her calculation of Emma's strength of mind.

CHAPTER XI.

Time passed on, but with it came no new incident in the life of Alice worthy of being detailed minutely in these pages. Suffice it to give a cursory sketch of her proceedings, and their result.

After what had passed, related in our preceding chapter, it may be naturally supposed that Alice felt more anxious than ever to remain no longer dependent on the bounty of her friend, to whom she felt she owed countless debts already, far beyond her power to repay. But let it not be supposed that any conduct on the part of Emma caused this feeling. Far from it; her generosity to Alice could only be equalled by the affection and friendship which prompted it; and if it were possible, that friendship had increased since the discovery, which might have been expected to have diminished it. At all events, Emma showed more anxiety to give proofs of it; and the many instances of kindness which she testified left no doubt of the attachment which she cherished for her friend. Notwithstanding this, Alice felt that, if happiness

was to be found, active exertion and personal independence could alone secure it. Emma, too, ceased to oppose her resolution.

"It may perhaps be better for both of us," said she, with her wonted candour. "I feel I have much to forget; and the less that is near me to recal the past, I shall the sooner be able to combat my own feelings. Yet Alice," she would often repeat, "you know the heart of your friend, while it beats, your image must still occupy its warmest affections; and while your Emma has a home, you are ever welcome to share it."

Alice knew, from past experience, the truth and sincerity of that declaration; and, while it gave her more fortitude to pursue her own efforts, it did not deprive her of the stimulus which prompted them. Her success with Mrs. Varley was beyond her expectations. The written statement of her capabilities was forwarded on the day after the interview, previously narrated. As Alice wrote it herself, modesty forbade any praise or exaggeration; but the paper on which she wrote enclosed a charm, which instantly won the favour of Mrs. Varley; namely, the *half yard of insertion lace* which Alice had been fortunate enough to get matched, and without which her qualities might probably have obtained little credit. Be that as it may,

three days after Alice received a note from Mrs. Varley, informing her that she had obtained for her (Alice) a situation as governess, in the family of a lady resident in Derbyshire, who was willing to receive her solely at the recommendation of Mrs. Varley.

Alice lost no time in calling on her kind patroness, to return thanks, and to declare her readiness to accept the offer. We shall omit the details of that interview, and comprise all in the simple fact, that everything was settled.

As Mrs. Russel had now concluded her own arrangements, and after seeing the certainty of Alice's departure, she had no longer any motive to delay her own. On the week before that appointed for Alice's journey to Derbyshire, she departed for the South of France, where she found a home with a former acquaintance, as before related. It would be needless, as well as painful, to dwell on the feelings of Alice and her mother, for such Mrs. Russel had been to her adopted child; the parting was indeed bitter, though in part voluntary on both sides; but Alice flattered herself, and strove to cheer her mother with the hope, that the time was not far off when they would meet again, when, as the sanguine hopes of her young heart trusted, she should be able to repay all that mother's past affection, and perchance welcome her to a home.

Mrs. Russel was not so sanguine; she had suffered too much to indulge in such bright hopes; yet she submitted to her destiny, and felt cheered by the thought that her beloved child was capable of maintaining an independence, which, although it separated them at present, was the surest means of securing future happiness. After the departure of her mother, Alice felt a desolation of soul, a depression of spirit, which she had never before experienced. For the first time in her life she felt herself alone in the world. Luckily, however, her present circumstances called for active exertion, and therefore she had not leisure to indulge in that excess of grief which might otherwise have vanquished all her long-boasted resolution, and in the soothing friendship and conversation of Emma she found a solace for her regrets. They talked much together, referred little or nothing to the past, but framed many plans and conjectures for the future. Emma repeatedly and earnestly conjured her friend not to submit to any hardship, or disagreeable circumstances, as she would ever find a kind welcome and a peaceful home at their house; to which assurance Mr. Gardiner added his, and Alice readily gave her promise, to avail herself, if necessary, of their generous offer.

"Perhaps," said Emma, laughing, on one

occasion, when they were alone, "perhaps, before we meet again, I shall be able to welcome you to a home of my own, and you shall judge if I do not make a hospitable landlady."

Alice tried to laugh also, but she saw too well that the gaiety of her friend was assumed to hide far different feelings; yet she trusted that time and Emma's strength of mind would at length banish them for ever. Emma trusted so likewise, and these words, although lightly spoken of, were not so lightly considered. Emma Gardiner, though young, could already boast of more than one suitor for her hand and heart. Although neither wealthy nor beautiful, she had attracted the notice and won the affections of those who knew how to prize virtue and talents. None deserved more to be happy, and none—but enough of her at the present; her fate is reserved for a future period in our narrative.

The arrangements requisite for Alice's departure occupied but little time. Her wardrobe required few additions; but the generosity of her friend forced her to accept of so many things, that, against her intentions, she found herself supplied in a style far more splendid than she either wished or required. In short, she found every want attended to, even in the minutest details, without any exertion on her

own part. Mr. Gardiner had declared his determination to pay the expense and arrange all the particulars of her journey; and it would have been useless to have offered any opposition, since, in fact, all that she possessed had been the gift of his bounty; and the whole stock of money which she could call her own consisted of a ten-pound note, which Mrs. Russel gave her at parting, and which Alice well knew was part of a sum given by Mr. Gardiner to her.

On the evening before the day fixed for her departure, Alice was not a little surprised at receiving a summons from Mr. Gardiner to speak with him in his office, below stairs. Emma was out; and when Alice entered the office, she found Mr. Gardiner seated at his desk, alone. He had been writing, but he laid down his pen as she entered, and, rising, handed her a chair.

"You will be surprised at my asking a private conference with you, Alice," said he, smiling; "but, as the advertisements say, I have something of importance to communicate. So, if you will sit down, we will have some conversation."

Alice obeyed, and Mr. Gardiner proceeded: he hesitated before beginning to speak, coughed, and cleared his throat several times, with all the appearance of a man unwilling to commence a disagreeable subject.

"I suppose you are aware," said he, at length,

" that you had certain jewels, that were sold by that rascal Sharpquill. Very well; these jewels were bought by a jeweller, from whom I have purchased them again, for the purpose of returning them into your possession, as it is my opinion they may prove the means of discovering your relations at some future period. You will find them contained in that casket: take them, they are yours, and I hope they will be of use to you."

As he spoke he pointed to a casket which lay on the desk. Alice's astonishment for a moment checked her utterance.

" Oh, Mr. Gardiner," exclaimed she, in a voice almost inarticulate with emotion; " after all you have done already—this is too much, it is more than I can accept, or——"

" *Repay*—you would have said," interrupted he; " but there is no occasion for that. What I have done was my own will. You never asked me, therefore I have no title to claim payment. You know *I* have no bond to produce against you; and, believe me, I do not want one. But, about these jewels, mind, they are yours only on one condition; that is, that you pledge yourself, never to sell them. I have a strong notion they will be the means of discovering who were your parents. Mrs. Russel was of my opinion also; and urgent necessity, and the conduct of that scoundrel Sharpquill, alone compelled her to

part with them. Luckily, it has been in my power to restore them, and I give them to you, on your promise that you will never part with them during the course of your existence. You understand me?"

"Yes, yes, and I promise joyfully," replied Alice, with emotion. "They were my mother's; and, to me, they must ever be sacred." Here her voice again faltered; and, as she leant her hand on the casket, her tears flowed fast, while her tongue refused to speak the extent of her gratitude.

Mr. Gardiner put the key in her hand. "Take them up stairs," said he, "and examine them, and see if they are all right. I am busy at present, but at tea-time we shall talk as much as you like about it." Here Mr. Gardiner resumed his pen; and, drawing the paper on which he had been writing again before him, recommenced his occupation.

Alice hurried from the apartment, and sought solitude to indulge in those feelings of which the abrupt but generous nature of her benefactor prohibited the utterance. She hastened to her own chamber, and, setting down the casket, unlocked it, and proceeded to examine the precious relics which it displayed to her delighted eyesight.

There is something in the feeling with which

we regard any article which has belonged to one whom absence or death has parted from our sight. A gem, a trinket, or even the most trifling article of wearing apparel, will recal the image of the departed being who was wont to own it; and seems, while it reminds us of its former possessor, to wear almost a resemblance to his, or her, appearance. It was not so with Alice; she had no trace of memory that could recal her mother's image to her mind; but the very idea that the jewels on which she gazed had once adorned that mother's person—had once been touched and possessed by her, made the inanimate things appear to her eyes as though they offered sympathy. One by one she handled, and gazed on the precious relics, each awakening a new sensation in her heart. Yet these sensations were sad, though sweet. It was sweet to think that she still possessed those sacred pledges—sacred because they had once been valued by that being, who, although never known to the heart of her child, was still dear, and holy to her imagination. Yet it was sad to reflect, that the being thus loved and revered was parted for ever from her sight; that the barrier of the grave forbade that the daughter's yearning eyes should ever behold her who gave her birth; and that the inexorable fiat of death denied their meeting in this earthly existence.

Alice's tears flowed afresh at these reflections; but, alas! they had often flowed from the same cause. From her earliest childhood, Alice had felt bitterly the fate, which had not only rendered her motherless, but had deprived her of that parent before she knew her love, or could lament her loss.

Often, in her solitary hours, she strove to fancy a being, whose form and lineaments, according with the description given her of her mother, she deemed might bear a resemblance to her. So deeply was that vision impressed on her thoughts, that the ideal form became familiar to her mind's eye, and, in course of time, occupied a place in her memory, as vivid, and dear, as the recollection of a real existence.

Often, in her dreams, it hovered near her pillow, and seemed to bless her with such a fondness of affection, that she wept, on waking, to find the vision fled.

As she restored the valued relics to their casket, she felt her heart glow with delight, to think they were again hers; and she asked herself if she could ever be sufficiently grateful to him who had bestowed them again on her.

Mr. Gardiner was truly generous. His good actions were the effects of good feeling; not, as is too often the case, done for the purpose of obtaining praise or admiration. He detested

ostentation, and avoided gratitude. It was not possible to offend him more by anything, than by recurring, in his presence, to any praiseworthy action he had done. His one darling quality on which he prided himself, and for which he valued others, was sincere honesty; and his steady observance of it was, sometimes, practised to an extent which was apt to give offence to those whose feelings and opinions were not so well fitted to bear display as his own.

"I detest all forms of politeness," he would say; "they are nothing but minor acts of hypocrisy; and the man who expresses more grief than he really feels—such as saying, 'he is extremely sorry' for an acquaintance's trifling illness, or misfortune, is in so far a liar."

Few there are who are capable of observing such plain honesty; indeed, few would be tolerated if they attempted it; for these forms of politeness, or affectations of feeling, are generally all that render most persons tolerable to each other. Very few can, like Mr. Gardiner, render themselves worthy of respect and friendship, by more valuable actions or qualities.

At length the time appointed for Alice's departure arrived; and, with a heavy and aching heart, she took farewell of her kind and generous friends, and set off for Derbyshire. For the first time in her life, she felt that she was

entering the world wholly alone, and her resolution sank within her. For a time, she almost repented the step she had voluntarily taken, but this feeling was only temporary; and, as by degrees the first pang of separation became less keen, she felt her spirits again resume their wonted firmness.

It was early in the morning when she set out, and the good fortune of a beautiful day, added to the rarer accident of very pleasant fellow-passengers in the stage-coach, soon restored our heroine to comparative good spirits.

It was late in the evening when she reached the village of Matlock, she therefore slept in the inn where the stage stopped, and early the next morning proceeded to the place of her destination.

Lady Mary Foster, for such was the name of the lady, was well known in the village, and her residence was not far distant from the inn; therefore Alice walked to it, and found no difficulty in reaching it. It was an elegant house, or rather cottage ornée, for it was built on that plan, and surrounded by extensive pleasure-grounds, situated on the banks of the Derwent. The scenery was charming, but Alice thought little about it, as her mind was more engrossed with the anticipation of those who inhabited the dwelling. She had brought with her a letter of

introduction from Mrs. Varley; but, with the exception of merely stating the names and number of the family, that lady had given her little or no account of those with whom she was to live. As she advanced towards the house, being admitted at the garden-gate by a porter, Alice was met by a female servant, who had been sent from the house to meet and conduct her, as she stated, by the orders of her lady, who had been anxiously expecting Alice for some time. Alice followed her conductress, and, entering the mansion with a beating heart, was ushered into an elegant apartment, where a lady, who was seated at a table writing, rose, and courtesying with much politeness, handed her a chair. Alice returned the courtesy, but she felt overcome with embarrassment and confusion as she accepted the chair; and the stranger again coolly resumed her employment. As a profound and unbroken silence ensued, Alice had leisure and courage to examine the countenance and physiognomy of her companion, who, seated opposite to her, continued writing, without once raising her eyes from the paper. "Surely this cannot be Lady Mary," thought Alice; and she earnestly hoped it might not be, for the appearance of the stranger was by no means calculated to inspire the opinion that she would prove an agreeable person to live with. She appeared to be above

thirty, of a very lean and meagre figure, a sallow countenance, of an expression denoting melancholy and discontent. Her silence, too, denoted anything but a social disposition; and, in short, Alice began to augur very unfavourably of her future comfort.

Just at that moment she was agreeably undeceived, by the re-appearance of the servant, with the message, that "Lady Mary wished to see Miss Russel in her dressing-room, if Miss Russel would be kind enough to step to it."

Miss Russel joyfully assented, and was conducted through a splendid suite of apartments, and ushered, with due form, into the dressing-room of Lady Mary herself.

Her ladyship was seated on a sofa at the further end of the room, but she rose when Alice entered, and advancing, with a manner at once kind and graceful, bade her welcome; and taking her hand, led her to the sofa, and took her place beside her. After many kind and polite inquiries about her journey, her fatigue, &c. &c., Lady Mary took the letter of Mrs. Varley, which Alice gave her, and proceeded to read it.

"You must excuse me," said she, smiling, "for I am anxious to read anything that comes from London,—that busy and ever-stirring scene, where I have spent many gay and happy

days,—and Mrs. Varley promised me in her last, to send me all the news she could collect. Do sit beside me while I read this, for, after I have finished, I wish to speak with you. I dare say you can amuse yourself here for a short time." As she spoke, she pointed to a table which stood close by, on which lay scattered a number of books, engravings, &c.; and, hastily breaking the seal, began to read the letter.

Alice took up a book, but she scarcely looked at its title-page, for her whole interest was occupied with Lady Mary; and, as the latter was intent on her letter, our heroine had ample opportunity of satisfying her curiosity by an examination of her face and figure, which might otherwise have appeared too inquisitive.

It required no examination to see that Lady Mary was beautiful,—beautiful to a degree which at first sight struck the beholder with admiration; but the most critical judge of female loveliness might have gazed for a lifetime on her countenance, without finding one fault, or discovering the full perfection of her ever-varying expression, which constantly displayed her perfect features in some new charm.

Alice thought she had never beheld any human being so beautiful.

Her figure, though ill-adorned by the close and mournful habit—that of the deepest mourn-

ing—displayed proportions of sculptorlike elegance. Her long fair hair, partly confined by a comb, had escaped, and hung in loose tresses, gracefully shading a neck and brow whiter than alabaster. Her features, small and delicately moulded, resembled the picture of some Italian madonna; while her full dark blue eyes, shaded by their long lashes, beamed with that sad and softened brightness which bespoke a soul not wholly untouched by sorrow.

There was an expression of melancholy, or rather sadness, in her whole aspect, which touched, while it deeply interested, the feelings of Alice, who was charmed by the winning softness and condescension of her first reception.

Lady Mary appeared to be above thirty; and although care had left his traces on her fine features, they had lost none of that freshness of youth, which gives charms even to less lovely women.

"I ought to give you a double welcome," said Lady Mary, as she folded the letter which she finished reading, "because you have been the bearer of this amusing epistle. Poor Mrs. Varley! she has still the same fund of tittle-tattle, or gossip, as she used to have; trifling, perhaps, but to one who is wholly shut out from society the most trivial events excite an interest. I spent the first, and I may now say the only

happy, years of my existence in London; and I delight in anything that reminds me of it, or tells me what is passing there. By-and-by, when we get better acquainted, you must submit to my teasing you with all sorts of questions about London; but I must not tire you now. Let me conduct you to your apartment, for I dare say you are fatigued with your journey."

Here Lady Mary rose, and, on Alice's entreating her not to trouble herself, replied, smiling, "If we intend to live together, we must expect to trouble each other;" and taking Alice by the hand, led her, through a room adjoining, into an elegantly-furnished sleeping apartment.

"This," said she, "is intended for your future bed-room. I hope you will not object to its being adjacent to mine, as I wish to be near my children. A sitting-room and library adjoin to this, which I have fitted up for your use. I think you will be convenient enough; if not, I can only promise, that my best endeavours shall not be wanting to make you so."

Alice thanked her, but she felt too grateful and happy to be able to express herself.

Lady Mary then left her; and, before proceeding to change her dress, Alice eagerly hastened to examine the rooms which were destined for her future habitation. They consisted of

three apartments, fitted up with a taste uncommonly attentive both to ornament and comfort. Adjoining to the bed-room was a small study, amply supplied with books, musical instruments, &c.; and the third room was an elegantly furnished sitting apartment, with a glass door, which led to an extensive lawn, beyond which, through the shade of a grove of trees, the winding Derwent was visible, with its shining waters laving the green and peaceful banks. Alice could scarcely refrain from exclaiming aloud the fulness of her delight, as, with the enthusiastic transports of youth, she fancied herself in a haven of bliss and happiness. To her, who had spent her life in the close and crowded limits of a metropolis; whose ideas of rural scenery, and the charms of nature, had been till now confined to the boundaries of Hampstead-heath, or the beauties of Richmond-hill, this perfect solitude, and picturesque country, seemed to her like some fairy paradise. And Lady Mary, too, so kind, so charming! In her brightest day dreams, she had never pictured to herself so much happiness and good fortune.

She had scarcely time to change her dress, when she received a message from Lady Mary, requesting her company at luncheon, a summons which she readily obeyed. She was conducted to the sitting parlour where she was at first;

and to her delight, found her ladyship alone. The sour-looking personage was no longer there.

"I have sent for you upon very short notice," said Lady Mary, smiling, "but I want to have a *bit of chat* with you, and this is my most leisure time, the children being gone for a walk with their governess. Poor Miss Marlow! I am almost sorry to part with her, now when the time is really come: but I must confess I have sincerely wished for it. She is a very clever and lady-mannered person, but unfortunately her temper renders it next to impossible to live with her. Poor lady, she is certainly to be pitied; for nothing seems to make her happy or contented; but we must not begin with scandal, I only hope I shall have better success with my attempts to render you comfortable. Every one has faults, but we must try and not let ours disagree entirely, and I dare say we shall be able to find out some good properties in one another.

Alice smiled in reply, for her heart was too full to speak; and it was with difficulty that she restrained herself from bursting into tears. To a warm and affectionate heart, great kindness always excites emotion.

After they were seated at table, a pause of considerable length followed; during which Lady Mary gazed on her young guest with apparent interest. "You must forgive me,"

said she, at length, "for looking so closely at you, but a strong likeness which you bear to one who was once very dear to me, makes me feel at once pleasure and regret, in looking in your face. I had a sister—it is her you resemble, and her image seems revived in your countenance—the very smile—the features." Here Lady Mary paused, and turned aside to wipe away the tears which filled her eyes.

"Does that sister live?" asked Alice, in a tremulous voice.

"She lives, but not for me. It is many years since we parted, and circumstances had then proved that her affection for me is not equal to what I fondly deemed it. It is very improbable that we shall ever meet again; but her later conduct is unable to efface from my heart the remembrance of what she once had been. We had loved each other in infancy, in childhood we were sole and inseparable companions. The remembrance of that early attachment still lives in *my* heart; and I shall love you for the resemblance you bear to her." Here Lady Mary's tears flowed afresh, and Alice feared to speak, as she saw she had already awakened painful feelings.

"You must not mind me," said her ladyship; "I am sometimes weak enough to give way to foolish regrets; but I have suffered much by the

unkindness of the world. By-and-by we shall be better acquainted; you may then know more of my past history, and learn to pardon my follies; at present it must appear selfish and even indelicate to intrude my feelings thus upon a stranger. But let us talk of other subjects. My children will return shortly, and I must introduce you to your future pupils. By to-morrow, too, when you have sufficiently rested, I shall walk with you round my shrubbery, and show you many charming places in our neighbourhood. I dare say we shall find plenty of things to talk about, without plaguing each other with our melancholy reflections.

Here the sound of children's voices was heard, approaching the room door, which presently opened, and two beautiful little girls ran in, followed by the sour-looking personage, who first received Alice. After caressing them both affectionately, Lady Mary took a hand of each of the little ones, and leading them to Alice, said, laughing, "I must introduce you formally to your future charges, Ellen and Amy Foster: and you, my dears, must try and make acquaintance with your new *school-mamma*, as I dare say you will soon call her."

The elder of the children, a little girl of about six years, beautiful as a cherub, and the image of her mother, threw her arms round Alice's

neck, who had stooped to kiss her, and clinging with much fondness, exclaimed, "Yes; and I'll love you, because you are so very pretty. But you must promise to love mamma, and kiss papa's picture."

The sour-looking governess laughed, and Alice, though surprised at the energy of this strange request, could not help laughing also. Lady Mary coloured and seemed confused, but instantly took her daughter in her arms, and embraced her with much fondness. The other girl, who was about a year younger than her sister, and, though a pretty child, was by no means as beautiful, drew back, and remained standing at a distance. When Alice held out her hand to her, she advanced with evident reluctance, and suffered herself to be caressed, but without returning the embraces.

"I must not *forestall* your good opinion," said Lady Mary, with a smile, "but if you love sensibility and the finer feelings, I think my little Ellen will be your favourite pupil." As she spoke, she again embraced with fervour her elder daughter, who, seated on her knee, nestled her golden locks on her mother's bosom.

The governess rose, and formally made her exit, after which, the children were soon dismissed, and Lady Mary proposed a walk in the

surrounding grounds, to which Alice readily assented; and a visit to the shrubberies, hot-houses, &c., occupied the time very pleasantly until the dinner-hour, when they were again joined by the children.

"I hope, Miss Russel, you have not been accustomed to a very gay life," said Lady Mary, as she took her seat at the table, "else I fear you will find this house very dull. I myself, and my children, are all the company you are ever likely to see; as I have no acquaintances in this place. All I can promise you is to make myself as agreeable as I can; and after that, books, music, nature, and our own thoughts, will remain for us."

"And who," replied Alice, "would wish for more?" And she felt what she said, for that retirement, and the society of Lady Mary, appeared to her delighted fancy the fullest extent of human felicity.

"As your pupils are too young to require much attention at present," proceeded her ladyship, "you will therefore have plenty of time unoccupied, which, of course, will be at your own disposal. The hours from nine until twelve, are all I wish to be devoted to their instruction. Luncheon then will occupy time, for half an hour or so; after which, they walk out until dinner-time; and it depends on your own incli-

nation whether or not you will accompany them. We dine at three, as I prefer an early hour for the sake of having my children's company ; after dinner your time is your own ; and, save what you wish for your own amusement, the children need not be near you ; for I shall then be at leisure, and their company is my dearest solace and diversion. I drink tea at six, and sup at ten ; at both of which meals I shall be happy of your company, but if you prefer your own apartments, I shall take care that you be not intruded upon."

Alice thanked her ; but no thanks could have expressed the gratitude and delight which she felt. When night came, Lady Mary again conducted her to her bed-chamber. "The children will sleep in this room, because, as I already said, I wish them to be near me, and my dressing-room and bed-room communicate. As they passed through the outer apartment, which led to Alice's, Lady Mary paused before a little alcove bed, where lay both the sleeping children ; and fondly imprinted a kiss on the fair brow of her eldest darling.

"You must not think me a foolishly fond, or partial mother," said she, as she turned away. "My children are my only happiness, and they are both equally dear to me ; but little Amy so strongly resembles one, whom reason commands me to forget, but whose image affection cannot

recal without anguish, that I often turn away from her, to get quit of the painful reflections that her features awaken. But I must not keep you up any longer; and, take notice, I shall not scold you, although you sleep very late to-morrow; as I know you must be weary. Do not let anything disturb you; and there is no chance of intrusion; for, although the children's room and my apartments communicate, each has a separate door. So, good night, and sound slumbers to you;" and, drawing Alice towards her, she kissed her cheek, and hastily quitted the apartment.

Alice felt in no disposition for sleep. Her heart was too full, and her mind too much occupied; and the novelty of her situation left no room for mental lassitude. She had promised to write to her mother as soon as she was settled, and she felt no time could be better fitted than the present for giving a true and just account of her situation; besides, it was the only means by which she could disburden her heart of the feelings with which it was loaded; and she well knew that every sentiment she expressed would meet with a ready and affectionate sympathy.

With what eager pleasure do we transmit our thoughts in writing a letter, when we know that the one for whom it is destined will read it with

anxious readiness, and, prizing every word it contains, for the sake of the hand that traced it, will feel an answering sympathy with every feeling which dictated it!

With eager pleasure Alice hastened to fulfil her promise; and she pictured to herself the delighted affection with which her letter would be looked for and received, and the joyous emotions which its contents would excite.

She proceeded to the library, which adjoined her bed-room, where, finding every material she wished for, she sat down and commenced her letter. As it is easy to suppose what was the nature of its contents, we need not here transcribe them. As sufficient proof of its length, our reader must know that it occupied an hour and a half in writing; and, as Alice was at no loss for words, her pen was not idle for a moment during that time. Twelve o'clock struck as she concluded; but, although surprised at the lateness of the hour, she felt by no means tired. As she rose, intending to go to bed, a chink of the window-curtain, half open, admitted the beams of a bright full moon; and she could not refrain from lingering for a moment to look out on the resplendent orb which shone with such lustre. The window of the study looked out to one side of the house, the three apartments being built in a projecting wing terminating at the

back. The last, or sitting-room, overlooked the back lawn, terminated by the beautiful prospect towards the river, before described; and the bed-room and study windows looked out upon a shady walk, leading to a small private gate, which opened upon the high road; that Alice had noticed in the morning when out with Lady Mary. As the tall trees obstructed any distant view, there was not much to admire; but, to the eyes of Alice, who had spent her life hitherto amid the close walls and smoky chimneys of London, the sight of quiet nature and a clear unclouded atmosphere had charms inexpressible. There was a stillness, sweeter than music to the ear tired with the din and busy hum of a city; and the soft breeze, scarcely stirring the leaves of the trees, displayed their thick foliage to the clear beams of the moon. Alice gazed with feelings almost amounting to rapture, till, recollecting the lateness of the hour, she dropped the curtain, and sighed as she turned away from the enchanting scene.

At this moment, a light sound attracted her attention from without. She paused. It was a footstep. It paused. Again she heard it—a light and cautious step stealing past her window. With instinctive motion she sprang towards the casement and raised the curtain, and beheld the

figure of Lady Mary, wrapped in a loose cloak, passing quickly down the walk. She stopped before the gate, which was distinctly visible, took a key from her pocket, unlocked it, and, going out, shut it after her.

For some moments, Alice remained standing, lost in astonishment. Could she trust to the evidence of her own senses? And, if so, what could Lady Mary seek out at such an hour, and alone? Alice felt certain it was she; for the bright moonlight left no chance of mistake. She knew the figure, the gait and step; besides, it was the same dress which her ladyship wore on their morning ramble. But what could be the purpose which led her out at such an hour? The gate opened on the high road, which led to the village, that was about a mile distant; but Lady Mary had said she knew no person who lived there, neither was it probable that she would choose that time of night to make calls or pay visits. For some time, Alice lingered at the window, expecting her to return; but, at length, the sound of another hour striking, warned her of how long time had already elapsed. Besides, what right had she to watch the motions of Lady Mary? Whatever might be her motives, she had no authority to question them; and, therefore, to indulge in any such idle curiosity, was

at once mean and unjustifiable. With these reflections, Alice quitted the window, and, returning to her sleeping-room, hastened to undress herself, and retired to bed.

It was some time before she could compose herself to sleep; but, when it came, it was deep and unbroken.

CHAPTER XII.

It is now almost time to return to our hero, whom we left unsettled and very far from comfortable. We must now introduce him to our readers as the inhabitant of a lodging in the Rue de C——, Paris, at a very short distance from the Hôtel-Dieu, at which he has already commenced his studies. His dwelling consists of three apartments on the first-floor of a respectable lodging-house, which he chose in preference to a boarding-house, because he considered that his time would be more at his own command. One of his rooms, facing the street, was adapted for a sitting-room, and served the purposes of a library and study, as the whole stock of his books were kept there, a bed-room adjacent to that, and another for his new companion, constituted the whole of his suite of apartments.

Lewis Barnard (for such was the name of the youth whom chance and misfortune had introduced to our hero) attached himself to his benefactor with a degree of affection which soon obtained a reciprocal feeling; and, in a short

time, mere compassion, which had at first prompted Walter, gave place to a regard which soon linked him strongly to his young companion. The disposition and qualities of Lewis were of a nature calculated to inspire strong affection. Mild and gentle even to submission, he possessed talents which only required encouragement and cultivation to surpass others. But there was a diffidence and habitual timidity about him, which caused him to shrink from those pursuits which attracted attention or required confidence. Weak and backward in his growth, it seemed that nature had moulded both his mental and bodily frame for a state of dependence on some stronger-minded and constituted being than himself. Yet that very dependence was calculated to inspire that species of affection which cannot exist to any great degree when the object of it requires no support from our kindness.

The highest extent of poor Lewis's ambition aspired to nothing beyond being employed in the capacity of a menial attendant on his benefactor. But Walter would not consent to his being so degraded. His education, although but little advanced, had been of a superior nature, and his ideas and pursuits had been in no way inferior to Walter's, who therefore resolved, that, while they remained together, it

should be more on the footing of companions than otherwise. With that view, he applied himself to assist the studies and improve the mind of Lewis, whom he found a grateful and docile pupil; and the exercise of assisting his companion gave himself a motive for constant application to his own education. Although anxious to pursue all his instructions, poor Lewis had but little soul for ambition. His mind was capable of comprehending and retaining with great rapidity many things which had cost his teacher much more trouble; but he applied himself to them more with a wish to oblige Walter than with any apparent predilection on his own part.

There was a natural submission, and a studied anxiety to please, that sometimes would even irritate Walter; who, half in sport, half in earnest, taxed him for being sycophantic. But he reproached himself for remarking at all on it, as he reflected that the early harsh treatment, and tyrannical usage, which the poor youth had been subjected to, had inculcated a degree of timidity, which made him fear giving offence, from the mere habit of his former cruel state of oppression.

During the most part of the day, except at meal times, Walter was abroad, attending the hospital lectures, &c.; for his professional stu-

dies were always his first and most eagerly pursued occupation.

In the evening he spent his time generally at home, reading, writing, and assisting Lewis, who, having passed the day at home, and alone, usually reported his progress, in any employment, to his kind instructor.

But we would not have our reader think, that the time of our hero was devoted entirely to wise studies, or useful purposes. On the contrary—he was not more wise, or more infallible, than others of his age. It was true, he was studious how to behave well, and ambitious to become great; but what young heart enters life without feeling these sentiments? Some succeed, and many fail. Let us only hope, that Walter is not destined to be of the latter class.

His evenings were not universally devoted to literature of the *useful* sort; for at times, after the fatigues and application of a long day, he felt inclined rather for relaxation and amusements. Having no acquaintances in Paris, he was shut out from the pleasures of society; as he had not met with any individuals, whom chance had thrown in his way, who appeared to him worthy of cultivating intimacy with. Several young Englishmen were among the class of students who usually attended the lectures with him; but none of these excited either

interest, or friendship in him, sufficient to prompt him to seek any further association beyond that which was necessary for politeness.

Long walks and visits to the various interesting sights in the metropolis, were a great source of gratification and amusement; and, sometimes, when at home, the re-perusal of some favourite poet, or dramatist, passed over the time. Lewis had read but little; and poetry was to him a new and exquisite source of delight. His voice was melodious, and his enunciation clear and distinct; therefore Walter found much pleasure in hearing him read aloud various portions of his favourite poets, an employment which seemed to afford extreme happiness to poor Lewis, who often urged his willing friend to abandon more important studies and listen to him, as seated on the ground, or on a low ottoman (his chosen position), at Walter's feet, he read with raptured eagerness the effusions of the immortal poets. Even the fictitious tale was sometimes read and listened to with interest; interest heightened by a sympathy in each other's tastes and feelings.

Walter mingled in the busy world, and to him the hours thus spent were a mere relaxation—a temporary relief from more useful and tedious pursuits; but to Lewis, they were the first and most valued hours of his existence—anxiously

looked forward to during the course of a solitary day, and the highest reward of labours, which would have otherwise been motiveless.

Lewis was a friendless being. The whole world held none who cared for him, and none whom he could love, except Walter. His young heart, naturally affectionate, had no other object on whom he could fix his thoughts. Gratitude, and his own perfect helplessness, first prompted him to cling to his benefactor. Habit ripened into attachment, which in time became so strong, that the society of his friend was necessary to his happiness.

It is, in fact, true, that the first principle of all human affection is founded on selfishness.

We love a person, at first, for some quality which he possesses (or we fancy he possesses), that can contribute to our happiness or benefit. It is true that our love will continue after that quality, real or imaginary, has ceased to exist; but the continuation is merely the force of habit.

Thus selfishness was the first cause of Lewis's affection for Walter. He clung to him for protection, before it was possible to have formed any attachment to his person.

Perhaps it might be surmised that selfishness alone continued his friendship, as from Walter he derived his only means of existence, exempt from the drudgery of manual labour, which his

weak frame was ill calculated to sustain. But that was not the case; habit possessed as strong a power in his attachment as that of the most devoted lover, who continues to adore the object of his heart, after reason has long taught him to know its worthlessness.

Had Walter cast him off, had he scorned, reviled, and even injured him, Lewis's affection was too deeply rooted ever to be effaced. But enough of this for the present; as a long time elapsed before an opportunity occurred to prove the truth of his devotion.

One forenoon, as Walter was returning home from a lecture, curiosity prompted him, as he passed a *Morgue* to enter it. These Morgues are houses of the same nature as the London bone-houses, or dead-houses, as they are termed, where all the dead bodies of persons unknown are laid for a certain time, for the chance of being recognised and owned; but different from those of London. The Morgues are open to public inspection; and being situated in the principal streets of the metropolis, with two doors to the back and front of the ground-floor, or large hall, where the dead lie exposed to view, many persons pass through this room, which is generally an entry, or short cut from one street to another, and, therefore, the chances of recognition are numerous.

As Walter entered, there were several persons surrounding one of the dead bodies, which lay extended in its shell, or open coffin, in the most conspicuous part of the room. It was the body of a man, rumoured to have been murdered, as he had been found in a narrow entry leading to one of the principal *hells*, or gaming-houses, with marks of great violence on his person.

The corpse was recognised by the keeper of the gaming-table, as that of a stranger, who had won an immense sum of money on the preceding night; and, as no money was found on the body, the suspicion naturally was that he had been robbed and murdered.

Walter shuddered as he drew near. He had been accustomed to look on death with calmness; but its image had never before been presented to him in such a ghastly shape. The countenance of the unfortunate man displayed the signs of a recent and terrible death. The features, frightfully distorted, wore a mingled expression of terror, rage, and vengeance. His eyeballs, distended, glared with their glazed pupils, with a fixed intensity. One could almost have fancied he beheld him still grappling with his murderer. The face was livid and swollen, and a black mark on the throat showed, on nearer inspection, the distinct impression of a hand, the finger and

thumb of which, deeply indented on the windpipe, had done the work of murder.

The wearing apparel of the unfortunate deceased was, as usual, suspended on a nail in the wall, above where the corpse lay; and its fashion indicated its owner to have belonged to some eastern country.

As Walter turned to go away, his attention was attracted by the conversation of two young men, who stood near him. They spoke in French, but Walter perfectly understood it. The subject of their talk was the unfortunate man, whose body they had, like our hero, been examining. Some remarks which they made excited his curiosity, and he lingered near the spot, as if occupied with something else.

"In faith, Dupont," said the taller of the two, whose accent and appearance proved him to be an Englishman, "they seem to have made sure work of him; that squeeze on his throat has been done by the hand of a master. A gripe like that would not have taken many seconds to finish him."

"Methinks he would have quitted the hazard-table in a less vaunty mood, if he had suspected this," replied the other, whom Walter recognised as a young surgeon of his class. "He looked right proud when he pocketed his winnings.

He little thought he had wrought so hard to earn *this!*" A loud laugh followed.

"By-the-bye," proceeded the last speaker, "I could almost wager my conscience, that De Costa is the author of this pretty piece of work. You know it was from him that the largest sum was won, and he is a desperate fellow; besides, Fontanay swears he heard him threaten to avenge himself, and——"

"Peace," interrupted the other, "you should be more cautious of what you say. The police are already on the look-out for Marmot. If they catch him, so much the better; but it would be an unpleasant business to be obliged to be witnesses."

"They are vastly unlikely to catch *him*," replied the other, "for I understand he quitted Paris that very night this happened, and I dare say is on his way to America by this time. But, by-the-bye, Travers, I think you ought to be glad if he's caught: for what would you say if you got the blame yourself? The murdered man won an immense sum from you, too!"

"Not very likely, as I happened to be playing at *vingt un* with yourself at the very minute the job must have been done. But, by Jove, although the poor fellow, there where he lies, did strip me of a devilish sum, I feel indignant at his murder, and should heartily rejoice that

the doer of such a deed met with his just punishment."

Walter's eyes were by this time directed too earnestly to the countenance of the speaker, to attend to what passed further in the conversation. The name of Travers no sooner reached his ear, than he felt impelled to advance, and claim instant acquaintance with one who bore the name of a person whom he felt bound in honour to search for. But he suddenly restrained himself, as he adverted to the chance of mistake; and then hesitated, whether he ought to attest his knowledge of a perfect stranger in such a public place. As he stood debating with himself, his eyes fixed on the countenance of the stranger, he almost fancied he could trace a resemblance in its features to those of Rose Simkin; whose earnest and solemn request recurred more powerfully to his memory. At that moment the companion of Travers wished him a good morning, and walked away. Travers turned to depart in the contrary direction, when our hero, stepping forward, saluted him by name. He started, and turned round.

"Pardon me," said Walter, "but, if I mistake not, I heard you called by a name in which I have an interest."

"My name is Travers."

"*Charles* Travers?"

"Yes; and what of that? I have not the honour of your acquaintance," replied the stranger, laughing.

"This address may seem abrupt and intrusive," replied Walter, "but I will briefly explain myself. I am an Englishman, and if I judge by your accent and appearance rightly, you belong to the same country. I was requested, by a friend of mine, to look out for a person bearing the name of Charles Travers; and, if possible, to obtain tidings of his welfare, or his fate, whatever it might be. Perhaps you are that person?"

"On my life," replied the stranger, gaily, "you put a puzzling question. It is out of my power to answer it, unless I knew more of the circumstances. Most truly I believe my name to be Charles Travers. I am English, and I have a friend or two (though not many) who might possibly inquire about me. But perhaps you will favour me by naming the kind individual who commissioned you?"

"A near relation of yours, I believe. The name is Simkin."

The young man coloured scarlet, as he replied, with some emotion, "I had an uncle of that name, and friends—kind friends; but some years have passed since, and I believed they had ceased to care for my fate. However, I am

happy to make acquaintance with one who so agreeably undeceives me. Perhaps you will come home with me to my lodgings, and we will talk together. This is no place for private communications, and I dare say you will have many questions to answer."

Walter readily assented, and passing his arm into that of his new companion, submitted himself to his guidance.

The countenance of Charles Travers was calculated to inspire confidence and secure good opinion. His fine features, and frank, manly expression, seemed the index of a mind incapable of deceit; while a ready and good-humoured smile, bespoke a spirit framed for gay and social habits. Walter's first fancy was not wrong; for, on nearer examination, he could still observe a strong resemblance between Travers and his lovely cousin, although the lineaments of the former were of course more strongly marked in masculine proportions. There was the same laughing blue eye, the same arch and playful smile; and even the bright golden locks and fair complexion were the same.

After passing through several streets, they stopped before the door of a respectable-looking lodging-house, in the Rue de N——, not far from where Walter lived. Travers knocked at the door, and, on gaining admission, led the

way to a small, but commodious apartment, on the second floor.

"This is all my *suite*," said he, smiling, as he pointed to a bed in one corner. "You must not think worse of me for my shabby accommodation; I assure you, good entertainment is oftener to be met with here, than in many a more splendid dwelling. I am but a single man, as the saying is, and having nobody to please but myself, I prefer good living, and social merry-making, to fine furniture and solitary apartments. Sit you down, we must drink a glass together to our better acquaintance."

Proceeding to a small cupboard, he unlocked it with a key which he took from his pocket, and produced several bottles of various sizes and shapes, which he placed on the table, with two wine glasses.

"You will find a choice here," said he; "and I promise you, none of the sour *light wines*, as they term them here. Good port, and some brandy, which I always keep in memory of good old England. But I have much to learn about that quarter; so let us drink to each other's health, and tell me all you know of my worthy uncle and kinsfolk."

"I fear I have little to tell," replied Walter. "Chance made me acquainted with Mr. Simkin and his family; and I scarcely know if I am

authorized to make use of their names in my inquiries after you, as only *one* individual commissioned me."

"I think I could guess who that *one* would be. I have a little cousin, Rose by name, and who used to be as pretty and blooming as the flower so called. I used to fancy she had a kind heart; and I once flattered myself it would not forget me. Am I right in my conjecture?"

"Perhaps so. Nay, after all, it is as well to tell the truth. You *are* right. I do not know if she wished me to tell you so; but I am sure she need not blush for feelings which she expressed with such pure and disinterested sincerity, even though their object were worthless."

"Thank you. I see you pride yourself on speaking plainly. By the way, I thought so the first time you addressed me. It was a good joke to say you knew me for an Englishman by my accent. You are the first who has told me so since I came to Paris. They pretend here to take me for a Frenchman born. But no matter, I like sincerity. It is a rare virtue. But what of my good uncle? Is *he* as plain and downright as ever? As stanch a supporter of John Bull in his pristine obesity?"

Walter laughed. "It is now more than four years since I first saw Mr. Simkin, and I know no difference since then."

"The devil! That must have been long before he and I parted; and yet I have no recollection of you."

"I never visited his house until a few months ago. We met first on one occasion for a short time."

"Ay, ay, nunkey was always social. But it is now two years since I saw him. And his good lady: is she always as *rotund* and *fashionable* as she used to be? And my lady cousins (pretty Rose excepted, as we must talk of her afterwards): are they still as sentimental?—as *spirans* of sighs, and as *aspirating* of h's, as I used to remember them? And, for mercy's sake, do you know if they have got their prime ambition, a French governess, yet? The house used to be in continual hot water with arguments *pro* and *con* about that subject."

"There *was* a governess I believe," replied Walter laughing, for he recollected his own adventure with the personage who bore that title.

"Well done, they are successful Amazons. Surely, Rose had gone over to their side; for without her persuasive eloquence, my uncle could never have been brought to consent to such an inroad on his good John Bull system. He considered the girls to be splendidly educated, when he sent them, between the years of thirteen

and fifteen, to *missus* somebody's *finishing seminary* at Highgate-hill, from which he made them be sent home every Sunday, lest they should forget how to eat plum-pudding, and talk *cockney-tongue*. He was a queer native, but I needn't laugh at him for *that*, as Sunday was always my gala-day. I was kept hard at it all the week. *My education* being then finished, and being articled to an apothecary (termed a surgeon) in the Old Jewry, I was right glad to shut up shop once a week, and *spend* Sunday at his house with my pretty cousins. They were very good girls, after all, though little Rose was my favourite. She was a warm-hearted, sweet-tempered little thing; I used to fancy myself in love with her, and many's the time we used to vow eternal fidelity to each other, long before we knew the meaning of the word. Well, these were happy days. I often think of them. But they are all over now, and it is best to make a joke of them, as serious thinking always gives me the blue devils. But fill your glass, man; I am no great drinker, but I don't like *temperate* fellows. How long is it since you left London?"

"About six weeks only. I am here for the same purpose as yourself, I believe,—to attend the hospitals, and surgical lectures. I am surprised we have not met even before this."

"I' faith, I am not always to be found at the hospital, or lecture-room either. I play the truant now and then. The fact is, my good uncle thought my education finished when I was out of my apprenticeship; and I feel disposed to take advantage of his opinion at times, and give myself little trouble about study, as practice is more profitable."

"Are you practising in your profession?"

"Ay, to be sure; and constantly too, as it takes up all my time."

"I hope it is profitable, then," replied Walter, smiling, "as I should be glad to give good accounts of you."

"Pretty fair, at present especially. But you needn't say much about me until we know each other better. It is difficult to judge on so short an acquaintance; as it will require time to prove whether my word is to be relied on, although I'll venture to say, cousin Rose would not be ready to doubt it. But tell me truly, did none of the others speak of me?"

"None. But my acquaintance was of very short duration."

"Ay, just so. But I did not expect they would. I dare say they do not deem it any honour to claim relationship with a poor scape-grace fellow like me. Little Rose, perhaps, remembers her childhood's play-fellow, and

forgets what he is now; or, at least, what he is deemed to be. But, no matter, if one has few friends, he has few chances of losing them. If you can shift for yourself, it is little matter, how many old men, women, and children, think well or ill of you. Yet, as you belong to none of these three classes, I hope there is nothing to prevent us from being good friends. I have many companions, such as you, who think me not such a bad fellow (that is to say, as long as I don't need their assistance); so if you will add to the number, I give you my word I shall not ask the loan of a sovereign from you for these next three months at least; and when I do, we shall not quarrel, though you refuse it me."

"And I shall not promise to lend it to you, lest I am not believed," replied Walter, smiling.

"Right, but you must not think of going just yet; that's to say, if you have no fair lady expecting you at home."

"Not I, but, perhaps, I am detaining you from some better employment."

"What! better than a fair lady? No; and I have nothing that you could *detain* me from. At this hour, I am always at perfect leisure. But you don't seem to fancy drinking at this time of day. I dare say you have not been in the habit of beginning at such an early hour. Neither was I formerly; but when a fellow is

cast on his own shifts, as I am now, he must take drink, like Uncle Toby's prayers, when and where he can get it. I do not, however, compel you to follow my example; and I hope you will not scandalise me to the good folks at home, as I should not like little Rose to fancy her cousin Charles transformed into a jolly toper, with a rubicond nose, and a brandy bottle at his mouth, like the picture of Bacchus on the ale-house sign opposite Mrs. Crosse's seminary, at Highgate. But, by-the-bye, it is my dinner hour now. Have you any objection to take a chop with me at N.'s? I always dine there."

"I have none in the world, on my own part; but I have a friend who will wait dinner for me, and I do not like to break my promise."

"Ha, ha! a friend, a *chère amie*, doubtless; of the fair sex, I'll warrant. By Jove, I have half a mind to go home with you, and get a sight of this *expectante*, whom you are so fearful of disappointing."

"I make you amply welcome, and should be happy of your company; as would also the person you mention, although you are mistaken as to your idea of his *genus*, and sex—"

"Ay, a good story; seeing is believing. But unfortunately, I am otherwise engaged, having promised to meet a young man of my acquaintance at N.'s; and if you do not feel inclined to

join us there, I shall not detain you any longer at present; but we part only on condition that you promise to spend the evening here with me, as I have already invited a few *choice spirits*, and intend devoting the hours between nine and next morning, to friendship, wit, and wine. So, if not too great a *saint*, I insist on your company."

"Although I merited that title, I could see no good reason for refusing," replied Walter, gaily; "therefore, I give you my word, and shall take leave of you only until that time."

"We can walk a short way together," said Travers, who accompanied him down stairs. "N.'s is only in the adjoining street."

With these words, he again drew Walter's arm within his, and they walked on together for some distance in silence.

"We part here," said Travers, as he stopped before the door of the well-known coffee-house. Adieu, I dare say you think me a queer sort of a fellow; but, no matter, you will not altogether dislike me, I hope; remember your promise, to-night at nine."

Walter assented, as he returned the pressure of his new friend's hand, and they parted; Travers entering the coffee-house, and our hero proceeding homeward.

The cloth was ready laid for dinner when he

entered the room, but Lewis was not there. As Walter had not seen him that morning before he went out, he felt somewhat surprised at his non-appearance to welcome him; and proceeded to the adjoining apartments in search of him.

Lewis's sleeping room communicated with Walter's, through which was its only entrance. The door was shut, but Walter opened it without the ceremony of knocking.

Lewis was seated at a table intently occupied; for he was bending over a paper, and did not seem to hear the door open. At the moment of Walter's entrance, he started up, and hastily concealed something in a portfolio; but not until Walter had caught a glimpse of the sketched outline of a miniature picture.

"Do not let me disturb you," said Walter, drawing back. "I came only to look for you, not *at* what you are doing."

"Come in, and welcome," replied Lewis, rising, and at the same time fastening the strings of the portfolio with a hurried hand and heightened colour. "You are later than usual. I have been waiting dinner for you, and there are letters from London for you."

"Letters from London! Where are they? Give them to me."

Lewis smiled, and pointed to the mantel-piece, where two letters lay; then laughed, as he

watched the eager looks of Walter, who seized them, and hastened to break the seals. Alas! neither was from the quarter he had expected. The first he opened was from the Earl of Ellerton; and the second, a clumsily-written curiously-spelt epistle, signed by Jane Brown. A glance at the signatures of both ended all his hastily-conjured-up hopes. The flush which anticipation had called to his cheek faded, and, with a stifled sigh, and a hasty exclamation of disappointment, he seated himself with indifference, to peruse their contents.

The letter of his lordship contained little but a mere request concerning some commission which he wished Walter to undertake for him at Paris.

But the epistle of Mrs. Brown was more lengthy, and concerning various subjects. As the orthography and mode of expression might puzzle our readers, we shall satisfy ourselves with giving a cursory sketch of its contents. The good matron proceeded to state her various anxieties concerning our hero's health &c., and having, as she said, received the enclosure, containing the *note* he was so kind as send, which informed her of his address, she made bold to take this means of thanking him, and letting him know how matters went with herself. She was still in her old lodging, it being situated

mostly in the neighbourhood of her *business*. But Betsy did not stay with her now, being (according to his wish) sent to learn the *profession* of a milliner and mantua-maker. She had paid for her instructions as he had told her, and was happy to say, the girl was comfortable, and making uncommon progress in her learning. The *lady* she learned with, lived at the west end of the town; but was kind enough to permit her (Mrs. Brown) to visit Betsy once a fortnight; and she saw, with her own eyes, that the girl was as happy as the day was long, who joined with her in sending her duty and gratitude to her kind benefactor, and ended with praying for her health and happiness.

Walter could not suppress a smile from time to time during the perusal of the foregoing, which cost him no small trouble and amusement in deciphering. When he had finished, he handed it to Lewis, and laughing, bade him examine it as a specimen of penmanship. Lewis read it with much apparent interest, though with equal difficulty.

"Your fair correspondent does you credit," said he, laughing, as he handed it back again, "though she has not made her gratitude very legible to the most of readers; but, by-the-bye, if it is a fair question, who or what is this Betsy she speaks of?"

"Her grand-daughter, and she is a poor woman, whom, from some circumstances, I consider myself bound to assist as far as in my power.

"Not on Betsy's account, I hope?" said Lewis, archly.

"Indeed, it is just on her account; for, if the fates had not chanced that she was knocked down, and her leg broken by a carriage in which I was riding, I fear poor Mrs. Brown and I might never have known or cared a straw about one another. But so it happened, and since then I have fancied myself to have an interest in the welfare of the girl, and it would not be fair to exclude the poor grandmother. You have all the story now."

"And may I ask what sort of a girl this Betsy is? I presume she is not totally destitute of *some* personal good qualities to assist in continuing your interest. Is she pretty? how old is she?"

"Very young, and certainly very pretty; but laugh if you will, I can only assure you that it is not either of those qualities that interests me."

"What! if she were as old and ugly as her grandmother, do you think you would have felt as long a continued interest in her?"

"Really, I cannot say what might have been; I can only speak upon what *is*. Mere pity and humanity first prompted me to assist the unfor-

tunate child, especially as I considered myself as partly the cause of her misfortune. Compassion for the helpless and degraded situation in which she was placed made me continue my attentions to her. But what I have since endeavoured to do for her is of course caused by her own good qualities. Had I found her to be worthless, I should have no less pitied her, but might not have felt the same anxiety to assist her. Her situation was wretched and degraded in the extreme, and I thought that I discovered qualities in her worthy of a better fate. I have since found that I was not mistaken, and while I have it in my power, I shall endeavour to serve her."

"But did no deeper interest prompt you than mere well-judging benevolence?" said Lewis, again assuming an arch and humorous expression.

"I see you are inclined to jest," replied Walter, good-humouredly, "and I have half a mind to answer you in your own strain; but I can hardly do so without being guilty of injustice to poor Betsy, who in no way merits such an insinuation. No, Lewis, I assure you there is no *love* in the question, if it is that you would pretend to fancy. I wish poor Betsy well in all respects, not excepting even her choice of a good husband, whoever he may happen to be."

"Ah, then it is not *her* hair you wear in a

locket, which I have caught you pressing to your lips with such rapture."

Walter coloured scarlet. "Come, come," interrupted he, in a tone of impatience, "a truce with this folly. I thought you said you had been waiting dinner for me when I came in. We need not wait now."

Lewis smiled, and, taking the hand of his friend in his, "You must not take my jesting in bad part," said he gently; "I assure you I did not intend it so."

"Nor was I foolish enough to think you did," replied Walter, pressing his hand warmly. "What, man!" added he, seeing Lewis's eyes filled with tears, "you surely think me very ill-natured and stupid, if you fancy I do not understand a joke; silly boy, you mistake me greatly."

"No, no, I do not mistake you," exclaimed Lewis eagerly; "you are good, noble-hearted, and generous, and I know you to be so. These foolish tears were not because I fancied you displeased; I know I have never suffered anything from your displeasure. It was your kindness to me, your sympathy in all my feelings; it was the very circumstance of your showing me that letter (trifling though it is) which proved the friendly confidence with which you regard me. Oh, Walter, my best, my only friend, how shall I ever repay your kindness?"

Walter was affected, in spite of his efforts to suppress it, by the emotion of poor Lewis. He passed his hand affectionately among the dark curls of the youth, as he kindly replied—

"By being happy, and making me so in your society, dear Lewis, is ample reward for all I have ever been able to do for you."

"Stay," said Lewis, laying his hand on Walter's, who had turned to quit the apartment, "I have something to talk to you about; something to tell you, which I have long felt interested in."

As he spoke, he took up the portfolio, which lay on the table, and opening it, took out a small half-finished miniature, which he placed in Walter's hand, who, at the first glance, recognised his own features.

"I have been keeping my work a secret from you," said Lewis, "because I wanted to surprise you; but I find I need your encouragement and sympathy to help me on, therefore I must tell you all my long-cherished plan." With that he took from the portfolio a number of coloured drawings, landscapes, fancy pieces, and miniatures. "These," pursued he, as he spread them on the table before Walter, "these have been my work during the hours I have spent in your absence. I have made a little progress with constant and eager application, and I intended to have surprised you with more perfect *chef d'œuvres*, if I

could have kept my secret with patience. I do not wish you to praise me," said he, as Walter was beginning some remark, "I only wish you to tell me whether or not you think it is likely I shall succeed; and if so, to give me some instructions now and then."

"Upon my word," replied Walter, "I think you are far superior to any instructions I could give. But who taught you to draw so well? Surely you must have learnt long ago, and practised a great deal."

"No person taught me except yourself, and that was only by giving me the example in those sketches of yours, which you have often seen me looking at. Some of these landscapes are copied from them, and others from fancy, and the recollection of various places I have seen. As for example, this is intended for a sketch of St. Martin's church, London, if you recollect such a place."

Walter looked at the drawing. It was an exact picture, instantly recognisable, and executed with a taste which would have done credit to an esteemed artist. He expressed his surprise.

"You do not think it was wonderful I should try and employ my time during the long hours of your absence, when I have no person to talk with, and you know I am but a poor hand at the more abstruse studies. I always liked draw-

ing, and used when a mere child to try and copy landscapes and faces; but it was only since a short time ago that I thought of applying seriously to the study. Do you remember the first day we came here, of a young man applying to you for charity, and showing you a few rough sketches he had drawn of the *Boulevards* &c., and you advised him to try and sell them; at the same time, saying he ought to study drawing more, and he might make money by it? The thought struck me then that *I* might begin to practise drawing. I knew I could sketch as well as the pieces that the young man offered for sale, and I determined to begin. Do you know what was the idea which prompted me, Walter? It was one which I have often thought of. It was that the time may come when I can no longer continue a burden on your generosity, and by this means I may be enabled to support myself; and if you will promise not to be angry, I will tell you another reason that I had."

"Why should I be angry?" said Walter, smiling, as he put back the hair from Lewis's brow, who was looking up with an earnest expression in his face. "I promise you I shall not be displeased at any reason which prompted such laudable and successful exertions."

"Then, Walter, I will tell you what it was. I fancied that the time might come—though I

hope and trust it never will—when *you* might need money and assistance; and if it were in my power to bestow it, how happy I should be! Nay, do not chide me, that time may never come. You know I do not wish it should; but you are the only one in the world I have to care for; and, unless I can fancy that my exertions may one day be associated with your benefit, I have no motive to stimulate me to anything."

"Then keep your present motive, my good kind Lewis," said Walter, affectionately, "and believe me I esteem its kindness. If I ever need assistance, I know none who would be so eager to give it as yourself."

"Then, will you promise to assist me? to look over what I have already done, and point out every error you can see?" exclaimed Lewis eagerly.

"I do promise; although, I assure you, it is not from modesty that I say you are far better than I am. But I shall be glad to examine the contents of your portfolio, and pass my skill on all."

"Oh, thank you, but when? it will be such a pleasant thing to hear all your remarks on my sketches. I have many to show you. But you are tired, and I keep you from your dinner. Come, for it is late; and when you are at leisure in the evening, we will look over them together.

In the evening you will promise me to devote an hour to doing so?"

"I am sorry I cannot *this* evening, having already engaged myself; but to-morrow I shall be glad to do so. But, come, let us dine, and I will tell you all about this engagement; and we will talk together about the best means of your pursuing your drawing, and many more things, for I have a great deal to say to you."

The delighted Lewis hastened to obey this command, and the two friends quitted the apartment and sat down at table together, where we shall leave them, to the enjoyment of a good repast and their own conversation.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MONTH has now elapsed since we last left our heroine, whom we find still in her new home at Lady Mary's, no less satisfied and happy than on her first reception. Her time passed on in peace and happiness. The occupation of the instruction of her little pupils and the society of their charming mother rendered the retirement in which they lived sufficiently social and happy. There were times, however, when Lady Mary seemed to be oppressed by the existence of some grief, either past or present, which rendered her melancholy; and a certain restless and fretful state of mind made her but poor company. Yet, at these times, she generally shut herself up in her own room; and Alice, who was left perfectly at the freedom of her own will, was at no loss how to amuse herself; but they must have a very selfish and unfeeling disposition who can be perfectly indifferent to the happiness of those with whom they live, even though it can in no way interfere with their own. Alice grieved for the sorrow of her kind friend, although she did not know its cause. She longed to offer sympathy;

but was fearful of giving only additional pain to the unfortunate Lady Mary, who seemed to avoid displaying her feelings. A delicate mind is always reluctant to intrude; and Alice feared for doing so. Besides, the grief of Lady Mary might arise from a cause which she might not wish to tell. She had several times spoken to Alice of her husband, whose death, though not recent, seemed to weigh heavy on her mind. It was more than probable that was the cause of her unhappiness; and if so, any remark would only serve to awaken fresh sorrow. One circumstance alone gave Alice uneasiness; namely, the nocturnal rambles of her ladyship, the instance related in our former chapter being by no means a solitary one; for since then, on four different occasions, Alice observed the very same occurrence. At the same hour, twelve o'clock at night, she saw her ladyship pass down the garden-walk, and go out at the gate facing her bed-room window, as before described. Twice, tempted by curiosity, she sat up, looking out at the window, to ascertain the truth of her own senses more certainly; and, on both occasions, her ladyship re-appeared, entering at the same gate, always carefully locking it after her, and proceeding to the house. It must not be surmised that Alice had any design of *watching* Lady Mary. On the contrary, although it may

seem incredible, the cause of her observing this was merely accidental. Alice had promised to her mother, at parting, to write once a week to her. The day fixed on was Tuesday; and, as she was generally too much occupied during the day to find time, she sat up at night to write out her letter for the morning post; and, as she did not retire to bed until eleven, it was twelve o'clock before she finished it. As Lady Mary made no allusion to such a circumstance, Alice felt puzzled how to act. She was afraid of appearing inquisitive, and she felt that she was acting almost a deceitful part in concealing her knowledge of the subject. But, although on very friendly terms with Lady Mary, she was not sufficiently intimate to presume to question her actions, however strange or mysterious they might appear. Besides, another circumstance occurred which caused her to be less frequently in the society of her ladyship.

About a week after Alice's arrival at Matlock, as she was taking a morning walk with the children, her attention was attracted to admire the picturesque neatness of a little cottage situated in a retired and solitary valley. As there was no other habitation near, she lingered for a few minutes to admire the tasteful and elegantly decorated garden which faced the rural porch; and she observed, from the careful culture and

rare plants which adorned it, that the inhabitant, whoever she or he might be, had chosen this lowly dwelling from taste, and not from poverty. As she stooped to examine the leaves of a rare exotic, she could not forbear a smile at the recollection, which involuntarily occurred to her mind, of the lines where

> "The devil did grin, for his darling sin
> Is pride that apes humility;"

when little Ellen, who with her sister had rambled at a short distance in an adjoining meadow, came running up to her out of breath.

"The lady's coming!" exclaimed she, catching hold of Alice's hand; "and I have run away from her to you."

"What lady, my love?" said Alice, looking round in vain for some person.

"The lady of the cottage. Amy and I met her just now in the meadow; and she wanted us to walk and talk with her. And Amy stayed with her; but I would not: I like you better. But here she comes."

Alice turned to the direction in which the child pointed, and perceived an elegantly-attired female advancing with little Amy, who clung to her with much apparent affection.

She courtsied gracefully to Alice; and advancing, said—

"I must entreat pardon for interfering with your little charges here; but they and I are old acquaintances, and I shall be happy to introduce myself to you through their medium."

"Oh, yes, Miss Russel," exclaimed little Amy, with a warmth unusual to her, "this is the cottage-lady, who is so good and kind to us; and you must know her and love her."

The stranger laughed.

"I do not enforce the latter necessity," said she; "but, if Miss Russel will do me the favour of resting for a short time in my house, I will try if I cannot introduce myself to her, for the sake of my little friends here."

As she spoke, she opened the little wicker-gate and again repeated her invitation to Alice, who, having no excuse for refusing, followed her into the house. The children, running before with a familiarity which showed them to be accustomed to the place, pushed open the glass-door which led to the interior, and entered a small, but elegant, sitting-apartment.

After handing a chair to Alice, the stranger proceeded for the first time to uncover her face, which was concealed by a long thick crape-veil that rendered it impossible to distinguish a single

feature. On laying it aside she displayed a countenance, which, although past the bloom of youth, still retained traits of extreme beauty, and an expression of cheerful benignity which was at once pleasing and interesting.

"I conclude," said she, addressing herself to Alice, "that the children of Lady Mary Foster are under your tuition. I have no acquaintance with her ladyship; but chance has made these little ones *great* friends of mine. Therefore I hope you will not be unfavourable to our continuing our usual intimacy. They often walk in this neighbourhood; and, as I love their prattle, I have sometimes invited them to spend an hour or so with me, and shall be happy of course of your company."

"If Lady Mary has no objections, I can certainly have none on my part," replied Alice; "and I presume she is aware of this before now."

"As to that, I cannot exactly say," replied the stranger, laughing, "as in fact I have never inquired. I have only recently come to reside in this neighbourhood, and the children walked this way with their governess. I took notice of them merely because I love all children, and I never asked permission to do so, nor whether any objection was made to my having done it. But, as you say, it is probable her ladyship is

aware of it, as children of their age are poor hands at any secret conspiracy."

Alice laughed; but she felt somewhat put out of countenance by the jesting tone of the stranger, who eyed her with a humorous and somewhat satirical glance as she proceeded—

"Although I am not personally acquainted with Lady Mary Foster now, I once knew a good deal of her; and, if she is not greatly changed, I knew her to be a person who does not always found her objections on reason. Therefore I shall give myself little trouble about them; but I must confess I should be sorry, if they tended to forbid me the pleasure of seeing my little friends; then I should be not a little annoyed. Necessity alone obliges me to remain for a season at this dull place; and, as I find none of its inhabitants that I care to form acquaintance with, I have no society but an occasional visit from these charming children, whose interesting prattle enlivens my otherwise tiresome solitude."

"*I* should think the charms of scenery like this would compensate for the want of any society; and, if I judge rightly from the taste displayed in your habitation, you are not insensible to the pleasures of nature."

"Rather those of art, you should say; for as I presume you allude to my garden, I must

inform you that nature has very little to do with its adornment. A skilful gardener is the only being to whom I am indebted; and I fear I am at times ungrateful for his gifts. I have no taste for rural enjoyments; indeed, I have always thought that those persons who gave preference to solitude, were unfitted, either by temper or otherwise, to live in society. Your recluse is generally a person who, finding all his friends are tired of him, makes a virtue of necessity, by withdrawing himself from their company."

"Nay, that seems rather a harsh theory. Perhaps he may be tired of his friends; or, perhaps some disappointment or misfortune may render the pleasures of busy life irksome, and even intolerable."

"I see you are an enthusiast; which is a character I have little or no sympathy with; or rather, my sympathies are all worn away by time. Enthusiasm is never felt on any subject that the reasoner fully understands. It is a species of bigotry which takes possession of weak minds; and youthful minds are always weak. But perhaps you are a convert, or disciple of that class (chiefly consisting of ladies) whose real happiness is founded on fancied misery. I think it is Madame de Genlis, who, among other witty things, says, that "some women have a

taste for the interesting character of *victim;*" an assertion which my experience has greatly corroborated. For, in my course through life, I have met more than one instance of persons who sacrificed their real happiness, or what rational beings would have *thought* was happiness, for the sake of appearing injured and miserable. Perhaps they were compensated by the pity of their fellow-creatures; but for my part, though the poets say pity is akin to love, I have always deemed it so much nearer allied to contempt, that I felt no ambition to obtain it. It has ever been my endeavour to enjoy life as much as was in my power, without injuring any one, and I have always found that the greatest enemy to my doing so, was *enthusiasm.* It is a species of folly which teaches us to expect an extent of bliss not allotted to mortals; and by raising our hopes beyond all chance of being realized, renders life a series of disappointments, self-created sorrows, and blighted hopes."

"I fear that is true reasoning," said Alice, with a sigh; "but without these day dreams—these hopes which enthusiasm creates, I fear we should find the stern reality of life had but little to compensate for the *real* sorrow which falls to the lot of the most unimaginative and cool-minded of humanity."

"Enthusiasm may add to these sorrows, but

never can cure them. Those day dreams which you speak of (being never realised to their full extent) only serve to increase the number of our disappointments and vexations. By teaching us to overrate all the enjoyments of life, it renders the humiliations and crosses which fall to our lot the more intolerable."

"But perhaps we do not understand each other. Perhaps we have different opinions with respect to the meaning of the word *enthusiasm*. Perhaps you regard the term in its old-fashioned, original sense; namely, that happy elevation of ideas, which causes us to regard all things that please us with a degree of admiration, or faith, which does not seek for any proof or inquiry to support it. But in these modern times the term has many significations, which, although all derived from the same source, lead to many different results. It was all very well in ancient times, when enthusiasts worshipped religion, poetry, and the arts or sciences, for the basis on which to found their passions; but as the enthusiasts of modern days are neither so select nor so judicious in their choice of objects, they meet with many humiliations and disappointments, which render the refinement and exaltation of their feelings a curse rather than a blessing to them. Mark the fate of an enthusiastic woman. First let us

observe what are the subjects on which she is likely to found her enthusiasm. Your modern ladies are rarely studious; and unless poetry be arranged to some fine air, that they can warble to flattering listeners, they care little or nothing for its beauties. The fine arts and sciences are unknown to them; therefore utterly indifferent; and as to devotion—I fear the minds of the fair worshippers are too much engrossed in the outward forms which they display in their pews at St. James's, or St. George's, to be deeply interested in the service.

"A woman's life is spent in a limited sphere of action. Her pursuits are trivial, and her happiness generally consists in what is of little real value. While unmarried, her chief ambition is to obtain the praise or love of the other sex; and enthusiasm serves only to lead her into errors and misery. If she is beautiful, it teaches her to overrate her charms, and place a higher value on the applause and attentions of others. If she loves, it misleads her affections; as she fancies, in the first commencement of her passion, that its object is possessed of virtues, talents, and love, that never can be found to exist in humanity. Soon or late, she finds her mistake, and she weeps in bitter sorrow over her disappointed hopes, and bewails the falsehood, which, in fact, owed its existence to her own

deluded imagination. But it is useless to give imaginary instances; I have met with real ones, and I have proved the truth of what I asserted, that enthusiasm is a bane to happiness. But I think we have got into a strange sort of conversation, for so short an acquaintance. We ought to know each other better, before we contend in metaphysical arguments. I trust we shall get better acquainted, and then I shall claim the privilege of seniority, to reason you out of all absurd fancies, or all that appear such to me. In the mean time will you join me at my repast? I dine early, and shall be happy of your company."

"I should be most happy to accept your invitation," replied Alice, rising, "but I fear I have already stayed beyond my time: Lady Mary will be impatient."

"Lady Mary is an *enthusiast*," replied the stranger, smiling. "She is one who has marred her happiness by overrating it in imagination—she is unhappy—you pity her. Rather, take warning by her fate. She has herself to blame for it. Enthusiasm caused her to look for devotion and love, which could not fall to the lot of any human being; and by striving to obtain more than was in her power, she lost all."

"She is generous, kind, and affectionate,"

said Alice, with some warmth. "If her fate is marred, she does not deserve it."

"Has she told you her history?"

"No. I never questioned her; but I have no doubt she would not hesitate to do so; as I do not think she ever had acted in any way to blush for."

"No matter; but attend to her story, if she ever relates it, and I am certain you will own it is a proof of the truth of my argument against enthusiasm. But I must not detain you. Will you come to-morrow at this hour? I cannot promise you any great entertainment; but I should like to make acquaintance with you, and I shall do my best to merit your good-will."

"I shall be most happy. But to whom am I indebted for this kindness?"

"To an obscure individual. My name is of no consequence. But to have no needless mystery, you may call me Madame Durant. Your friend, Lady Mary, may perhaps recognise my name, as we have met when she mingled in society; but it is not likely she will care to renew our acquaintance. Should she wish it, I must decline the honour, as I do not wish to form any associations while I remain here. As to you, I feel an interest in craving your acquaintance. Partly for yourself; but more for the sake of

these little ones, who are favourite play-fellows in my solitude. If you refuse to come and see me, I shall be grieved ; but I cannot accept your visits, unless you promise to come alone."

" That is a promise which will be easily kept," replied Alice. " For Lady Mary never sees any one but her own family and domestics; far less is it at all likely she would visit any one, who did not express a wish for her company."

" Nay, I mean her no slight; but my acquaintance here must be as limited, as I trust my stay will be. I thank you for this visit. Then am I to rely on you again returning to see me to-morrow, at this hour? Every day that you will take the trouble; and we shall try and like each other on better acquaintance."

Alice gave her promise, and her hand, to her new acquaintance; who affectionately embraced the children, as they took leave of her, and our heroine returned home.

CHAPTER XIV.

One night late, as Walter was returning home from a convivial party at Travers's, on turning the corner of a street, he felt a hand touch his arm, and, looking round, beheld one of those wretched outcasts, who, by their nightly degradation, disgrace the name of woman. She pressed his arm, and accosted him with a few words in French, which he did not distinctly hear; but guessing the import, he shook her abruptly off, and quickened his pace. Following closely, she again impeded his progress, and attempted to detain him by seizing his arm. As he turned round to reply to her scarce articulate words, he was struck by the appearance of her face, which he saw by the light of a lamp. It was ghastly pale, and bore the stamp of want and misery.

Touched with pity, he paused for a moment, and instinctively put his hand to search for his purse; when the poor wretch caught his arm to support herself, staggered, and would have fallen to the ground, had Walter not caught her.

"Oh, have pity on me," exclaimed she, in a weak, but imploring tone. "For mercy's sake

give me as much as buy a bit of bread for my starving infant. It is dying—dying of hunger," exclaimed she, elevating her weak voice to the shrill accents of despair.

Walter again sought for his purse, but the supplicant grasped his hand with energy; and pointing with frantic gesture towards a dark narrow alley, close by,—

"There, there," she exclaimed; "he is dying. Oh, it is but a little distance—and will no one take pity and come to see him? To look at him, and see if he could yet be saved?"

"I will, my poor woman," replied Walter. "Take me to where your child is. I will do what is in my power."

The woman seized his arm, and dragged, rather than led him, down the narrow alley to which she pointed.

The dim light, of a single oil lamp, showed the dilapidated dwellings, where vice and misery sought shelter. The door of one of the houses stood half open. His guide entered; relinquishing, for the first time, her grasp of his arm.

"This way, this way—follow me," said she. "It is dark; but keep close, and take care, as you ascend the stairs."

With a quick step she threaded her way along the dark and winding passage, and Walter followed close, otherwise he must have lost his

way; and, in spite of his humanity, he felt a slight misgiving when he found himself ascending the long and broken staircase, in utter darkness, with such a guide. It was too late, however, to draw back; but as they reached the first landing-place, the sound of wild mirth struck on his ear, and as he passed a half-open door, he saw within a group of wretched-looking and degraded beings, seated round a table in the uproarious confusion of drunken revelry. His guide made no remark; but, stepping more softly, beckoned him to follow, and hurried on, up another flight of stairs. She paused at the second landing-place. Here all was darkness. She pushed open a door, which moved with difficulty on its broken hinges, and discovered a miserable apartment, lighted by a single rush-light, that stood on the middle of the floor; on which, huddled together, in the midst of some filthy straw and rags, lay something, which, as he approached, Walter distinguished to be the form of an infant, motionless, and to all appearance dead.

The wretched woman flung herself on her knees, and raising it in her arms, held the light to its face. "Look at him—oh, tell me if he may be saved? Oh, God! he is stiff and cold! I fear it is too late."

Walter feared so likewise, and his fears were confirmed, when he took the child in his arms.

It was stiff—its heart had ceased to beat. To all outward appearance it had been dead for at least an hour. The wretched mother looked in his face with an anxious and inquiring glance, as he proceeded to examine the body of the infant, more carefully to ascertain if it had no signs of life. He replaced it on the straw.

" I fear it is too late, indeed," said he. The woman raised her wasted hands to heaven.

" Then all is over," she exclaimed, in a hollow voice. " I have nothing to hope for, and nothing now to dread." With these words she sunk on the wretched litter where lay the body of her child. She buried her head in her hands, and remained sunk in silent despair. After a brief moment she started up.

" Go, go," she exclaimed, motioning with her hand, and pointing towards the door, to our hero, who remained standing by her side, and though deeply affected, unable to offer consolation, " Go, go. Why do you stay here?—I no longer want your assistance! Surely you expect nothing from me! You have done nothing! You could not save my child! Could you have done that, I would gladly have paid you with my heart's blood! But he is dead? What do you tarry for? This wretched den—this foul straw—these rags, are all I have now in the world,—Do you covet them? Take

them; I want nothing. I have nothing but the corpse of my child, and that hell and fiends shall not tear from me."

And with frenzied gesture she clasped the stiff little corpse in her arms, and strained it wildly to her bosom.

"Alas! my poor woman," said Walter, soothingly, for he saw that excess of misery had rendered the unfortunate wretch delirious, "I would fain be your friend. It is too late to do anything for the poor child; but be comforted, and tell me how I can best assist you."

"In no way now. I want nothing that you can give. Oh, there is no mercy in man. A few minutes sooner, and my poor child might have been saved. But he is dead. Look at his glazed eyes; his little stiff limbs. He's dead; nothing can recal him. But a mouthful of bread, bestowed in time, would have kept him alive; and yet no one would give it me; no, though I begged for it on my very knees. Since the setting of the sun, I have wandered the streets, imploring every passer by, for as much as get a morsel of bread. None listened to my prayer; and yet all these were *men*—men who talked of humanity; many, too, who were fathers; and yet they could hear unmoved the cry of a mother, who sought bread for her starving child! Ay, ay, you need not look

doubtingly; I speak the truth, though I am an outcast and degraded creature. I sought only a morsel of bread to-night. Ay, and those who would not have repulsed my guilty allurements, spurned my supplication for the call of human affection. Yes, look on me now. I know I am a wretched loathsome object, one fit only to be turned from with disgust. It was not always thus; but what boots that now? I once was happy. Ay, even after vice and sin had set their brand on me, I still could cherish one dream of hope. But here it lies; this little clay-cold corpse is all that is left me now!"

And pressing the body of her infant to her bosom, overstrained nature was at last relieved by a flood of tears.

A loud obstreperous burst of merriment ascended from the room below, which sounded with harsh and ill-timed mirth on such a scene. A shudder thrilled the frame of the poor sufferer.

"Hark to them now," said she looking up; "They laugh, they revel; but that is not happiness. No, no; poor wretches. I myself, not a week ago, laughed as loud and noisy as they do; but I was not happy. No, no, my heart was breaking; and I only strove to forget myself in riot, more fearful than the despair I sought refuge from. But oh, I could never

have been so hard-hearted as turn a deaf ear to the prayer of a wretched fellow-creature. Last night, a number of those wretches, my former companions, met, as they are now, to feast and riot. I entered the room, and sought a bit of bread. Wine (one little drop of which would have restored my dying babe) flowed in waste and abundance. But they denied me,—they scoffed and laughed at my tears,—they thrust me from the apartment. I returned to this wretched room. I watched all night. I listened to the hungry moans of my child; while from time to time their loud laughter rang on my ear, as if in mockery of my despair. Oh, it was a fearful night. But it is all over. I can feel nothing now. I do not even feel revenge at their inhumanity. I will return among them. Like them, I earn my life by the wages of sin and infamy. I will again return,—laugh,—yell and riot,—and forget I ever had a child to whom they refused a morsel of bread. Ay, why should I not? Was it not myself who first denied it to him? Was it not my own deed? Yes, bitterly as I now lament it, I murdered my child!"

"What!" exclaimed Walter, with a shudder, as he involuntarily shrunk back from the grasp of the wretched being, who seized his arm with her long and almost skeleton fingers.

"Nay, shrink not from me. I am not stained with blood; and though I were, guilt carries no contagion. Do not mistake me either; I accuse myself of murder, but not as you seem to regard the term. No, no! these hands did not strangle, stab, or poison my babe. Look at these little shrunken limbs, that wasted corpse; one glance will show hunger caused its death. You shudder; but do not think that I withheld food from it, or left it to perish for neglect. Alas! if my life's blood would have nourished it, I would gladly have shed it. Neither did I take food to myself, and deny it. No, we fasted alike; but life was stronger in *me*, and I have sustained the wolf of hunger gnawing at my vitals. But that poor babe has fallen a victim to my too scrupulous virtue. Ay, laugh! no wonder; but *virtue* is the word. Fallen low, and sinful as I am, there was still one crime I shrunk from,—murder; and I shrunk from sharing the spoils of a deed of blood. Had I not done so, my child would have now been alive;—money, food, and comforts, would have been mine. But the death-groan of the murdered man rung on my ear. I saw his ghastly visage, and Heaven's vengeance called for atonement for such a foul deed. I could not share the spoil. I could not eat the bread stained

with the blood of the victim. I refused it, and my child died for want. But all is over. Lie there little innocent wretch; better—far better, to see thy wasted and shrivelled corpse, cold and rotten, on that bed of straw, than see thee live and fatten on the spoil of murder."

With these words she placed the body on the floor, and covering it with the straw which lay there, seated herself beside it, and with clasped hands sat in silence, as if unconscious of any presence, except herself and the inanimate object which she watched over.

Walter approached. "I can offer no consolation," said he. "You tell a strange story, but this is no time to question you. I pity your misery. Money may give temporary relief; and by to-morrow, I shall inquire more fully of how I can assist you;" and as he spoke, he put his purse into her lap. It was full. The woman took it up. She held it between her and the now nearly-expiring rushlight.

"There is plenty here," said she, with a wild laugh; "and gold too. An hour ago; oh how I would have blest you for this! An hour ago. But no matter. Thanks for your mercy—thanks, I say; but these are only words. I feel no gratitude!—I have none to give. But hunger, keen hunger, is gnawing at my vitals. Grief

does not even stifle it. An appetite, brought on by six days' fast, is not so easily spoiled. I am famishing of hunger!"

Walter made no reply. He had already remained too long an inactive spectator of such a scene. He hurried from the room, and descending the stairs as fast as he could for the darkness, hastened to procure some food and assistance. As he passed the first landing-place, by the light of the half-open door, he saw a man ascending the stairs, wrapped in a large cloak, which was muffled up about his head, and his hat slouched so as perfectly to conceal his face. He trod with a light and stealthy step, and stood aside to let Walter pass, muffling his cloak still closer as to avoid observation. But Walter was in too great haste to notice him farther; and from the nature of the house and its inhabitants, he had no expectation of obtaining any assistance there, but quickened his steps, and hurried into the street.

From the lateness of the hour, all the shops were shut up; and after going through several streets, he at last found a baker's shop, where, after much fruitless knocking and ringing, he succeeded in gaining admission. The owner of the shop, who appeared himself to ascertain the cause of this unusual summons, was fortunately a good-humoured civil man, and readily sold

the articles requested; though, as was not to be wondered at, he inquired for what purpose they were wanted at such a late hour.

"For a poor woman, who is starving of hunger," replied Walter; "and if you have any wine in the house, I would gladly pay you any price for some. But be quick, for I fear too long has been the delay already."

"Why," replied the baker, laughing, "I do not in general sell wine; but since the case is as you represent, I can let you have some, for this is rather an unseasonable hour to seek it elsewhere; and I hardly think my neighbour, the publican, would sell it for love or money, if you roused him out of his sleep at this time of night. But sit down for a minute or two, and I'll fetch a bottle I have in the back shop."

Thus saying, the good-natured man proceeded to the adjoining room, while Walter waited with much impatience till his return. After an absence of a few minutes, he reappeared, with the promised bottle in his hand, and Walter thanking him with much gratitude, put his hand in his pocket to pay him, when, for the first time, he recollected having left his purse with the woman.

"What is to be done?" exclaimed he, ready to burst with vexation, "I have left my purse behind me. The house is in an alley in the Rue

de ——, which is a considerable distance from this. My own house is farther away. Delay may render assistance of no use. What is to be done?"

The baker shoved back the red nightcap from his forehead, rubbed his head, and eyed our hero with a humorous expression, as he replied—

"Well, I suppose I must trust to your promise for payment. You don't look much like a swindler; and though you forget me, it does not much matter. But, by-the-bye, I think the alley you mention is a queer sort of a place to give charity in; and if you left your purse there, you needn't trust for its contents to pay me. But no matter, I'll give you credit; though I would advise you not to visit that same place any oftener, after this, than is just necessary for your charity."

Walter might at any other time have paused to question the meaning of this insinuation; and under other circumstances, he certainly would have noticed the humorous and somewhat equivocal laugh, with which the good baker, after handing him the bottle of wine, lighted him to the door. But he was in too great a hurry to notice anything; and repeating his thanks, he quitted the shop, and ran off as fast as he could.

He reached the alley, and soon distinguished

the house, the door of which was half open, just as he had left it; and entering he hastened up stairs. The group of bacchanals in the room, were still carousing as he had left them, and their heightened mirth and increased noise, indicated that drunkenness was arrived at its most sublime state. The door stood still half open, but our hero passed as formerly, unnoticed, and ascending the second staircase, reached his destination.

He entered, all was darkness. The rushlight had expired, and one faint red ember alone burnt and smoked in the socket.

"Where are you?" said he looking round, unable to distinguish any object, "I have brought you bread and a bottle of wine." He received no answer, and no motion or sound indicated that he was heard. Alarmed, he repeated his question louder; and seizing the light with a desperate effort, blew the expiring wick into a flame. It glared for a moment, and showed the room was vacant. He stood alone, beside the scattered straw; but the woman and child had both disappeared.

Astonishment for a moment petrified his senses. A feeling somewhat akin to terror succeeded; and stamping loudly on the floor, he raised his voice and shouted for light and assistance. His shout was answered by yells of bacchanalian glee from

the room below, which more resembled the howling of fiends than the accents of humanity. And groping his way through the darkness, he rushed desperately towards the stairs, where the sound of footsteps and an approaching light announced that his cries had been heard. In a few moments a woman appeared ascending the stairs; who in a shrill and authoritative tone, demanded the cause of the disturbance. Walter answered by leading the way into the chamber; which by the light she carried, he now saw to be perfectly vacant; and he related, as clearly as possible, the whole circumstances of his extraordinary adventure. The woman listened to him with an air of evident indifference. She was a forbidding-looking harridan, whose hardened aspect and degraded attire indicated her a fit inhabitant and the probable mistress of such a dwelling. She seemed to pay little or no attention to the facts which Walter related. "She knew nothing about the matter and cared as little. She only could not have a noise and disturbance made in the house. There was company below stairs, and they could not be troubled. She knew nothing about any woman nor child either. A woman *had* once lodged in that room, but she never knew of her having any child. She had given her notice to quit more than a fortnight ago, and never knew of her being in

the house since. At all events, she wasn't there now, and wherever she was it was nothing to her; and no uproar should be made in her house about her."

Walter saw that all reasoning would be utterly useless, especially as he perceived the woman was more than half drunk, and to all appearance, every one in the house would be worse. He therefore saw no alternative but to depart quietly, which he did, after ridding himself of the wine and bread, which he gave to the woman, who seemed much mollified by the gift, for she lighted him down stairs, and civilly wished him a good-night; a salutation which he returned, and gladly found himself once more safe in the open street.

This extraordinary adventure made much impression on his mind; and when he reached home, after relating it to Lewis, whom he found sitting up for him, they spent the remainder of the night in various conjectures. It was day-light before Walter retired to bed; and tired as he was, he could scarcely persuade himself, on awakening from a short sleep, that the whole had not been a dream. The absence of his purse, (one very convincing proof of the contrary) might have suggested the idea, that the woman might have decamped for the purpose of securing it; but that was absurd, since he had previously

given it to her, added to his promise of future charity. In short, the whole circumstances seemed enveloped in mystery, which the youthful mind is seldom disposed to diminish, and Walter's feelings were easily excited on any subject. For the first time he now recalled the circumstance of the man whom he met on the stairs, his evident desire to avoid observation,—the fearful and dark hints of the wretched woman implying her knowledge of some crime. All these, rapidly connected together in Walter's mind, gave rise to many strange and various conjectures.

Just as he was finishing breakfast, Travers called upon him; and as may be supposed, the whole story was detailed to him. Travers listened with much attention, though at various parts of the narration he seemed in doubt whether to prepare himself for laughing, or serious reply.

"This is a strange romance," said he, after Walter had concluded; "I am half inclined to fancy you must have dreamt it; as I drank rather freely myself last night, I shall begin to suspect you had taken advantage of my incapacity for observation, and transgressed the bounds of your usual temperance. But by-the-bye, you have not told me the street where this scene took place.

I am afraid it was here. In your own bed, in fancy?"

"No, by my faith indeed, as Lewis there can testify, who sat up for me until after four o'clock this morning. It was in a house, in that dark, dirty alley on the left hand of the Rue d——, as you come this way. I know it well, and can point out the house to you."

Travers started. "I guess it now," exclaimed he, as if a sudden light had broke upon him, and lowering his voice, he added, "you had better keep quiet on the subject, lest you get into a scrape. If I suspect rightly, that woman is the sister of *Marmot*, who is suspected of having committed that murder which has excited so much attention lately. I believe him guilty. He is generally suspected; and this female, who is his twin sister, and strongly attached to him, was believed to know something about it; she was taken up and examined, but as no proof could be obtained to convict her, she was discharged. Her description answers exactly with the woman you speak of. She is an abandoned and profligate character, and I know she once resided in the place you mention. Be that as it may, if I were you I would not mention this to any one. I strongly suspect that Marmot has not quitted Paris, in which case he will probably be

lurking near her. It would neither be safe nor pleasant to give rise to any inquiry, lest one might have the blood of the poor devil to answer for."

Walter assented, and his own suspicions, as well as those of Travers, were more strongly confirmed by the circumstance of the man whom he met on the stairs. They conjectured that it might have been Marmot himself, who for fear of discovery, might have urged the woman to quit the house before Walter's return. At all events, Walter agreed, with his friend, to say nothing about it to any person; nor to inquire further into the matter.

In more instances than this, Walter felt inclined to take the advice of his friend, whose shrewdness and superior knowledge of the world seldom led him wrong on any matter of judgment or prudence; for notwithstanding his apparent reckless disposition and giddy spirits, Travers was a sound reasoner and a cautious adviser. Indeed Walter sometimes accused him of being too cautious, to a degree at times jesuitical: an accusation which Travers bore with much good humour.

"When you have lived as long in the world as I have," he would reply laughing, "you will find it is the best way to look at the consequences before you examine the cause of any-

thing." An advice which our hero but rarely attended to.

Ten months had elapsed since his acquaintance with Travers, and their friendship increased with their intimacy. Walter had written the history of their first meeting, along with all the circumstances he could collect concerning him; which after being read and approved of by Travers himself, who added a short postscript, was despatched, under seal, to Rose Simkin; by whom they afterwards learnt it was safely and thankfully received. As this anxious and affectionate girl was therein informed of the address of her cousin, we do not presume to assert, that she never transgressed the commands of her parents, by sending a line to the prodigal companion of her childhood. If she did, Walter was not informed of it; and in fact he felt half inclined to wish that her heart was not too deeply interested in her cousin. That wish did not spring from envy,—no, far from it; but though Walter felt a strong friendship for Travers, and a deep interest in his welfare, he had many reasons for thinking him but ill calculated to requite or reward the affection of Rose. Besides, from the light and careless manner with which he readily mentioned her on every occasion. Walter saw or believed that she was nothing to him beyond a mere childish play-fellow, or at

most, an affectionate sister. But it is to be hoped, for poor Rose's sake, that Walter was mistaken.

As Travers had asserted at their first meeting, that he derived his means of living from his profession, Walter had no opportunity of questioning him further, though he often wondered why he spoke so little about it. However that was no business of Walter's, and he was glad to see that Travers seemed to have plenty of money. Although Walter did not require his bounty personally, he saw many instances of generosity in which Travers exerted himself with much discretion and kindness.

Dissipation was the bane of the otherwise noble character of Charles Travers. With a heedless, and too often degrading gaiety, he plunged amid scenes which in hours of more sober reflection his refined taste would have turned from with disgust. More than once Walter had endeavoured to remonstrate with him, but in vain, and he avoided the subject, which seemed to give pain, without having any good effect. Walter admired his talents, and prized his good qualities; but had often occasion to observe and avoid his vices.

"Come, come, Deverell, I will not allow you to become my Mentor," he would say; "I de-

clare you put me in mind of nobody but my good aunt, who used to lecture me upon the propriety of going to bed at eleven o'clock, regularly ; and never drinking more than four glasses of wine, upon any occasion whatever. I used to pay great attention to her in those days ; but I never minded her any longer than while she was speaking. It was no use contradicting her, for she had nothing better to talk about ; but it is a shame for you to waste good time in such sermonising, and as long as I know you have better conversation, I am determined not to listen to it."

On the subject of his quarrel, and consequent separation with the Simkins, Travers seldom spoke, but when he did, it was in a jesting and indifferent manner, which plainly showed that he regarded the whole affair as a matter scarcely worthy of consideration.

" I dare say," he said laughing, " that my good uncle thinks me very ungrateful. So, perhaps, I am ; but, unfortunately, nature moulded us with very dissimilar dispositions. I could not help it, for my ideas of right and wrong were directly opposite to his. It is true I was bound in duty to have yielded to his opinions. So I thought I did much more than was agreeable to my own comfort. But selfishness will always predominate, and therefore, when I found I could

shift for myself, I fancied it would be better for me to renounce any farther subjection to his control. I have done so; and I am sure, if he reasons calmly, he will at last come to my opinion, that it is better for us both to live apart."

"Perhaps as regards *reason*," replied Walter smiling. "But when persons have associated on intimate terms, independent of the ties of relationship, there is sometimes *affection* in the case, which makes them prefer each other's society even at the sacrifice of slight inconvenience."

"They are fools then, and ignorant of the means of securing happiness. More misery arises from the mere evils of cohabitation, than from actual misfortunes. If people consulted their real advantage, they would separate instantly from every individual in whom they found the least difference of sentiments, that was likely to jar with their comforts. By so doing they would prevent many long years of annoyance and misery."

"Man would soon become a solitary animal in your mode of reasoning, I am afraid; for it would be a rare matter to find any two persons of exactly the same way of thinking, or who might not occasionally *jar* with each other, as you term it."

"Well, and in your sense of the word man

had better *be* a solitary animal. Such at least *I* have always judged best to be. In so far as regards social converse, convivial meetings—general good will, and what the world terms friendship, I have no objections to that. It passes time agreeably, which is the chief motive of life. But as to those heart-shackling, mind-trammeling feelings, called *affections*, I know no earthly use they are, except to clog our wishes, and prevent the existence of free will, not only in our actions, but in our very thoughts. Thank God, I was never much troubled with them! but what little I had has always been a pain to me, and a drawback to my best prospects. I never remember an instance, in which I suffered my affection to sway me, that I had not cause to repent having done so. When a very young lad, I got an offer of a situation to go to the East-Indies. I wished to go, but my aunt and cousins could not bear the idea of parting with me. They objected—and cried. I could not bear to give them pain, so I gave up the idea of going abroad. The merchant who offered to take me died in a few years after, and left all his property and extensive business to the lad who went instead of me. So much for affection. In the most important, or most trivial actions of life, it is equally injurious. Besides, independent of interested motives, any

one who values his mere personal comfort and peace of mind, will endeavour to get quit of it. I remember once when my cousin, Rose, was sick of a fever, the misery I endured was inexpressible, from my fears for her life, and sympathy for her sufferings. She recovered, and I was happy then, to be sure; but that could not recompense me for the whole six weeks which I had spent in wretchedness. So much again for affection. If I had not cared for her, I should have felt no pain at her illness, and might have been spared all that useless suffering. These, and a thousand other occurrences, proved to me that to be truly happy, man ought to divest himself of all mental ties and shut out every affection, which sooner or later is sure to produce pain."

"And by avoiding all such pain, you deprive the existence of man of all real pleasure; for without affection, life would be scarcely worth caring for."

"Ay—such is your opinion. Such is the argument with which all the poor mistaken sufferers deceive themselves. But let any man question himself calmly and thoroughly, and he will find that every affection he has, or has had, is, or has been the cause of a certain portion of pain, more or less, from its strength, or what is termed its *endearment* to his feelings. Let the

poets talk as they please about 'fear and sorrow fanning the fire of joy.' If the fire will not blaze without the aid of such bellows, I shall allow it to be extinguished in my breast, and thankfully content myself with the substitute of tranquil peace of mind."

Such was the nature of the frequent arguments which took place between Travers and Walter; the result of which impressed no favourable conclusion on the mind of the latter, with regard to the justice of his friend's reasoning, and far less to the credit of his better feelings. Yet, from the general conduct of Travers, which was always generous and disinterested, Walter felt often inclined to believe that his arguments were not so much the result of his reason as he asserted them to be. Whether Walter judged right in this favourable conjecture remains to be proved in the sequel.

About a week after the occurrence of the event related at the commencement of this chapter, Travers called on Walter one morning, apparently labouring under great excitement.

"Marmot is caught," said he, the instant he entered the room.

"What! the supposed murderer! has he surrendered himself?"

"No; he persists in his innocence. He was

seized by the police, lurking in some den of infamy, where it appears he has been concealed ever since the event. He can give no satisfactory account of the cause of his concealment, nor where he was on the night of the murder. He was examined this morning, I was present, and he is to be tried on Wednesday. I shall be there to see the result."

"Have they any proof against him? Surely they have more substantial evidence to cause a trial than mere suspicion?"

"None, that has yet appeared; and I hope they will not find any. I earnestly hope it—poor Marmot! he must be acquitted. They cannot find him guilty, on the mere beggarly evidences of *time and place*. Oh no; they are certain to acquit him, from perfect inability to prove it."

"I hope so, if he is not guilty. But if he is so, I can see no great interest that need be felt in a man who could do such a deed. It is clear the man was murdered, and it is best that the guilty person should be discovered, as the innocent might otherwise be liable to suspicion."

"Right: there is great truth in that argument. The sooner the real author of such a crime is detected the better; and you say justly, that one who could do such a deed deserves the

punishment of his guilt; and, between us, I have more reasons than one of suspecting Marmot, yet I do not wish to hint any suspicions. It would not do to have his blood on my head. Let him stand his trial. I am certain they will not be able to convict him, and I have no ambition to lend my aid to help them. Poor Marmot! it is wrong perhaps to feel for him; but there was a time when I could not have believed him capable of hurting any human living thing. Vice! vice! what a hardener thou art of man's heart! I feel—nay, I almost believe him guilty—but still I cannot help pitying him—I cannot forget that he was once my friend. Many a happy evening we have spent together. Poverty, grinding poverty, could alone have prompted him to such a deed. It is true his own folly was the primal cause; but when we come to investigate the first source of all our actions, we find it generally springs from some fault of our own. Poor Marmot! I shudder at your crime; but I pity the sufferings which caused its commission—I pity the remorse which must wring your once tender heart!"

"So much for affection!" said Walter smiling, as his friend turned aside to brush away a tear which started to his eyes. "I see your boasted philosophy has not reduced your theory

to practice, as you yet allow your happiness to be disturbed for the sake of others."

Travers grasped his hand convulsively, and, overcome with emotion, hurried out of the room.

"He has a noble and feeling heart!" exclaimed Walter. "Arguments and theories have not been able to corrupt a soul framed for the most refined, the most generous feelings of humanity!"

CHAPTER XV.

Several days elapsed without Walter's again seeing or hearing anything of his friend; but as the latter had declared his resolution to be present at all the proceedings concerning the trial of Marmot, Walter concluded he was so occupied, and consequently felt no ways surprised at his absence. In the newspaper, he read daily reports of that event. The trial lasted for several days, and was still undecided, as but little satisfactory evidence could be obtained. Suspicion was strong against the prisoner. He pleaded not guilty; but had little or nothing to say in defence. He owned having been at the gambling-house on the night of the murder, and also having lost a large sum of money to the deceased. He had quitted the house a few minutes after the murdered man, but denied having seen him. His reason for concealing himself was for debt, and he had no money in his possession when taken into custody; nor could any be traced to have passed through his hands. His sister, however, had disappeared, and search was made for her in vain. It was therefore concluded that

she had absconded with the money, which had been placed in her hands by him when he saw himself in danger of being discovered. He solemnly denied all knowledge of her retreat. He wept bitterly at the mention of her name; although, during all the rest of the proceedings, he was perfectly unmoved. By some, this was regarded as a proof of guilt. In the more feeling i excited pity, as the attachment between him and his unfortunate sister was known to have been remarkable. The appearance of the prisoner was stated to indicate the extreme of poverty and wretchedness; and the place where he was discovered was a miserable hovel where he had fasted for four days.

Walter read the daily accounts with some interest, for the sake of Travers, who seemed to have taken so much interest in the fate of the poor wretch; otherwise there was nothing in the circumstances very different from any other occurrence of a like nature.

Late on the night following a long examination, when Walter was just preparing to retire to bed, he was surprised by a loud and well-known knock at the street door, and in a few moments after Travers entered the room. His face was ghastly pale, and his dishevelled hair hung disordered over his forehead, while his eyes glared from amid the matted locks with

a fearful wildness. He entered, and closing the door after him, sunk into a chair.

"Marmot is condemned!" exclaimed he in a hollow and terrible accent.

Walter started up—"And even so," said he, alarmed at his appearance, "wherefore let it affect you thus? Good God! what is the matter with you? You look the picture of death!" and, as he spoke, Walter endeavoured to take hold of the damp and chilly hand which Travers had clenched frantically in his chair.

"Stand back—touch me not!" exclaimed he in a voice of horror. "Leave me—fly—hate me! I am a wretch! Blood—blood is on me—the blood of the innocent will cry aloud for vengeance!"

Walter shuddered. "Surely there is more in this than I can comprehend," said he in an accent of dismay. Travers turned towards him, and fixed his distended and blood-shot eyeballs on him with an expression which was enough to curdle the blood in the bravest veins.

"Ay, ay—in sooth you guess rightly! There *is* something more than you can comprehend—more than you ever can comprehend, until fiends gnaw at your soul and the torments of hell rage in your heart, as they are in mine at this moment! Ho, there—give me brandy—drink—anything to quench the flames within me,

and bury in oblivion the agony that wrings my vitals! Look on me, proud, guiltless boy!—look on me: I have scoffed at your tenets of virtue; do you know now what I am brought to?—do you know that Marmot is condemned to die?—that before to-morrow at noon-day, he will be a headless corpse? and I—what must I be? A thing for fiends to scoff at, and men to spurn! Stand back—keep your distance: my hour is not yet come—you have yet no title to point the finger of scorn at me! Ha! do you hear the clock strike? That is the hour of twelve—twelve hours more will elapse before Marmot dies, and I am damned!" and striking his head with his clenched hands, he burst into a laugh like the yell of despair.

Walter was brave, but for a time he felt awe-struck at the fearful and unexpected scene before him, until summoning his presence of mind, he grasped the arm of Travers, while in a firm voice he addressed him—

"Charles Travers, what means this? Explain yourself instantly, or, by Heaven! others shall be called to witness this scene."

This threat seemed to have the effect of an electric shock. Travers looked up. He had become suddenly calm, but the expression of his countenance was more ghastly and horrible than before. He laughed frantically, as he replied—

"What do I mean? Unhand me, and listen: I will tell you. Marmot is an innocent man—*I am the murderer!*"

Walter started back—the blood deserted his heart, and he felt as if struck by a thunderbolt.

"Ha!—I knew you would be horror-struck!" proceeded Travers in a hoarse and hollow voice; "but it is true. Last night, at this hour, I would not have owned this to the tribunal of Heaven itself; but then I hoped that Marmot would have been acquitted. He is condemned to die; and the death of an innocent man was too much for a soul already sinking under guilt. Hell seemed to open her blazing jaws to seize me. I have confessed, and it seems as if I might now cling for a brief space, and for a while escape from the eternal punishment which awaits me."

Here the voice of the wretched man became inarticulate. A rattling sound in his throat followed, and he drew his breath with difficulty. Walter alarmed, hastened to his assistance, undid the fastening of his neckcloth, and opening his waistcoat, admitted the air, while he bathed his temples with some water which stood in a glass on the table. In a few minutes he recovered. The paroxysm of emotion was over, but he seemed exhausted, and sunk in despair.

"Ha! you seem anxious about a life which is worthless even to him it belongs to," said he, in

a broken and hollow voice. "Do you not remember saying that Marmot deserved to die if he was guilty of the murder? Do I not deserve it equally? These hands did the deed. Is it less bloody because the murderer is or was once your friend? Bloody do I say? No, there was not a drop of blood shed. One firm and strangling gripe did all. I see his eyes glare on me even now, as they did in the last agony. But it was soon over. He fell at my feet a lifeless and powerless corse. And what followed?—you would ask—remorse or horror? No; I calmly proceeded to the purpose which prompted me to do the deed, and rifled his pockets for the money which tempted me. I found it. I left my silent victim. He was my only witness, and could tell no tales. I had scarcely reached a place of safety, when the alarm spread far and wide of the fearful deed. I trembled not; for I was safe: the work was done surely and quickly; and none suspecting me, I took care to act in a way to prevent all chance of suspicion. Rumour blamed Marmot for the deed. His depraved habits and his suddenly absenting himself strengthened the belief. I took care to add to it, by hinting on every occasion my suspicions of his guilt. You shudder. That was worse than my first crime you will think. But not so wicked as you deem it. I believed—nay,

felt almost certain that Marmot had quitted France, I knew his debts were such as must compel him to conceal himself, and I felt convinced that there was no chance of his ever being arrested. I found my error. He was seized, arraigned, and brought to trial for the murder. Do you remember my horror on that event? Do you wonder at it now? But still I hoped even to the very last that he would be acquitted. I knew he was innocent, and I could not believe that he could be pronounced guilty. He was condemned, and sentenced to die. I stood in the court and heard his doom. I, the murderer, stood unmoved and heard an innocent man condemned to suffer for my crime—heard it in silence, and raised no voice to save him. But shall I seek to describe the torments that raged in my soul? No; I would rave—blaspheme, and you would doubt the truth of my confession. I do not ask you to give me credit for any feeling. The deed I confess deprives me of such a title. I murdered the man in cold blood. The hope of gain, stimulated by revenge, instigated me. I felt no remorse. On the contrary, my purpose was gained, and I felt satisfied. Yet my nature shrank and shuddered at the doom of Marmot. It was too much. I could not—I cannot bear it. So far I have gone; but no further can I proceed. My soul is stained

with crime, but it cannot bear a darker die; steeped in guilt, it refuses to absorb any more. I cannot bear it; I sink beneath the horrors of accumulated guilt. Hate me—curse me; for hell gapes impatient to receive a wretch whom earth can no longer bear."

His voice again became inarticulate with emotion. He covered his face with his hands, and averted his head with a convulsive shudder which shook every muscle of his frame. Walter looked on him with mingled compassion and horror. During the recital he had listened with that breathless and silent interest with which one hearkens to a tale of fearful import. Travers had spoken low, as if fearful of being overheard. The first frenzy of his emotion had subsided, and timid caution or dread of personal safety seemed to have taken its place; for, from time to time during his detail, he glanced towards the door with wild and anxious looks. None was near, or likely within hearing; Lewis had retired to bed a long time before, and an apartment separated his room from that where they were. The servant who had admitted Travers was the only person who was up in the house, and she was down stairs in the kitchen. Besides, Travers spoke in so low a tone at the principal parts of his disclosure, that it would have been impossible for the most anxious listener, sepa-

rated by the door, to have overheard a single sentence. Instinctively, without even reflecting, Walter lowered his voice also.

"What is to be done?" said he, "Marmot cannot be suffered to die. You must declare his innocence."

"And my own guilt I suppose," replied Travers, with a wild laugh. "Ay, ay, but can I do that? Look you, Deverell, do you think I could coolly surrender myself to die on the scaffold?—to die the death of a *murderer*?—to be branded by the world as such? No, no. Had I been possessed of such philosophy, Marmot needed not have stood his trial—nay, I needed not have done the deed. Cowardice, mean shrinking cowardice, prompted me to strike the blow which saved me from perishing of starvation. Do you think I could brave death in a far worse form—the scaffold and the butcher's axe? No, no; the deed is done. He must perish. Curse on my coward heart that could not bear its burden of guilt in silence. Out on my babbling tongue. But, by my soul, the confession seems to have lightened my conscience. I breathe freer, and feel that life is again becoming supportable."

"But do you really mean to allow an innocent man to be sacrificed? Surely you rave. These cannot be your feelings; else a moment before

this you declared a falsehood. Travers, what means this? I am not to be trifled with; I must know your purpose, and shall judge of it determinedly."

"Fool! you know it; surely you can judge. What would be your own in my situation. It is true, remorse stung me to the quick. Remorse is a babbling fiend who cannot keep the secret which caused his own existence; but once told, he ceases to live. An hour ago life was fearful to me; but I have told my guilt, and it seems as if in doing so I had imparted or transferred half its burden to you. I can now look on the whole affair with very different feelings. Marmot must die. I cannot save him but by the sacrifice of my own life. That cannot be. I have neither physical nor moral courage for such a sacrifice. Ha! who would? Who could? My time is not come. Guilt does not press hard enough on my conscience, and life is too dear to be relinquished. By this time it must be worthless to Marmot. He has made up his mind to die ere now; and death must in fact be a release from his long sufferings. I have heard him wish for it, and lament that he had not courage to seek it with his own hand. It would be ill judged, therefore, to give up a life which is dear to its owner, for one who joyfully must relinquish a wretched existence

which he only wants the courage to terminate himself."

"Travers," replied Walter calmly, for he struggled to command the indignation which he felt, "these arguments may do well enough in the theories of your philosophy, but by Heaven, while I have the power to prevent it, they shall not be put in practice, as regards the life of a fellow-being. I did not ask for this confession. I wished it not; but you have declared your guilt, and I shall not be its accomplice. Marmot's innocence shall be declared. His life shall be saved. Let the guilty answer for themselves; but he shall be cleared though I should sacrifice my own life in the cause."

"Ha! you would not betray me!" exclaimed Travers, forgetting his caution as, starting up, he uttered these words in a loud voice. "You would not betray me! Would you offer me to sacrifice? My blood would be on your head. By the Heaven you called to witness, your own shall be spilled first."

As he spoke, he grasped the arm of Walter, and drew from his bosom a stiletto, which he presented at his breast. At first Walter was thunderstruck by the suddenness of the action; but, recovering his presence of mind, he wrenched the weapon from the grasp of his antagonist, and in an instant, with the powerful

exertion of superior strength, seized him by both arms, and held him without power of resistance.

"Forbear, wretched man," said he firmly, "seek not to add fresh guilt to your crimes."

Travers fell at his feet. "For the love of God," exclaimed he, in a faltering and imploring voice, "have mercy on me. Have mercy on a wretch, whom despair alone could prompt to injure you. To you alone, *I* would be true to the last. Were you in my situation, I would not act thus cruelly. Wherefore seek the life of one who never wronged *you?* Whatever are my crimes, is it meet that you should be the first to shed my blood? Have mercy on me. My soul shudders at death. Save me. Let me fly —anywhere—let me fly from the scaffold, and eternal horrors that await me!"

Walter looked on the prostrate and grovelling wretch. Pity, contempt, and grief, swelled his heart. "Fly, then!" he exclaimed; "quick! hasten! save yourself—leave all to me. Rest assured, I will not betray you. Save yourself, and we meet no more."

Travers started up. "Then you promise not to betray me? Save Marmot if you can; but promise me you will not betray *me*. I know where I can conceal myself. I know where I shall be

perfectly secure. Give me your word? I can rely on it; and that will be sufficient."

"I promise you," replied Walter. "Hasten to save yourself. I shall not betray you, nor seek to discover your retreat."

"Enough, enough. Farewell. God be with you! my blessing and prayers. Save Marmot if you can—but keep your promise. Farewell!" And with these words he hurried from the room, descended the stairs with a rapid step; and Walter heard the street door close heavily after him.

Walter was alone. He remained standing on the same spot for some time in silent and petrified astonishment. At length he looked around; and the ideas fast crowding on his stunned reflection, presented the extraordinary occurrence to his mind. It was no dream—he did not think it so. All appeared as real and recent as it was. There lay the dagger which he had wrested from the hand that presented it to his heart. The fearful confession still sounded on his ear, and word for word as if the voice of Travers again repeated it.

Travers was a murderer. Marmot was innocent, and condemned to die in his stead. Walter must exert himself to save Marmot. Humanity, common justice, and every feeling of

his nature demanded it. But how? or by what means? He had pledged himself to Travers, not to betray *his* guilt. Independent of that, he would have hesitated to sacrifice the life of any man, far less one whom he had called a friend. But was he to remain silent, and suffer an innocent fellow-creature to be put to death, when it was in his power to save him? There was no time for mature deliberation, for by to-morrow at noon, Marmot must die. Now or never he must stand forward to attest his innocence, but without any proof, except his simple assertion. Would the judges acquit a prisoner whom their sentence had already declared to be guilty? No matter; come weal, come woe, whatever the result, the step must be taken. Twice Walter rose, and moved towards the door, and twice he hesitated—again to consider the best mode of proceeding. He had no one to assist his conjectures. Even though counsel had been at hand, he could not have availed himself of it without betraying the secret which he had pledged himself to conceal. The more he revolved the circumstance in his own mind, the more puzzling they seemed to become. In any difficult or dubious situation, reflection serves no good purpose. After a short time Walter came to that opinion; and after writing a short note to Lewis, which he left on the table for him to find the

following morning, merely stating that business had summoned him to a distance, and might probably detain him for a day or more, he took his hat, and wrapping himself in a large cloak, quitted the house, and proceeded to the residence of the superintendent of police.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.